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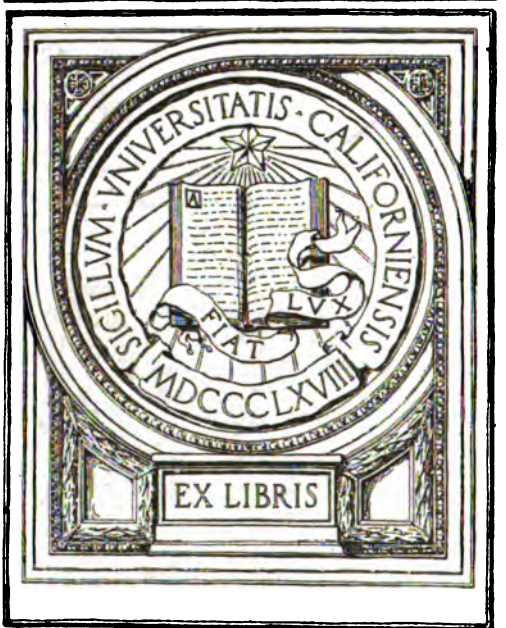
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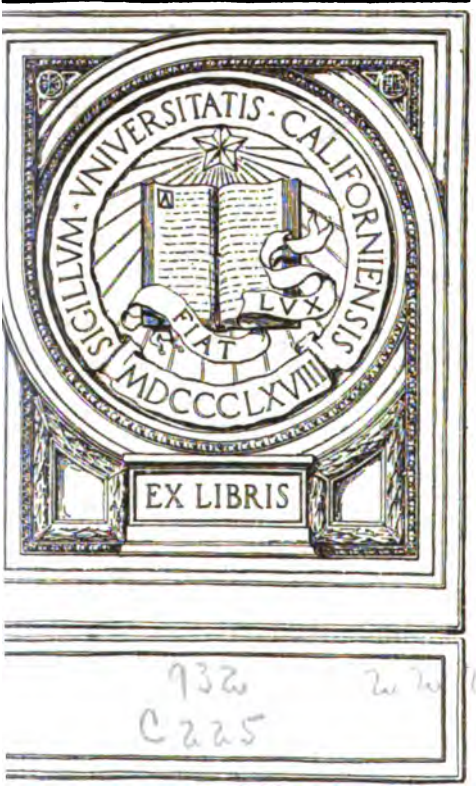
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SHAKESPEARE

STUDIED IN EIGHT PLAYS

BY

THE HON. ALBERT S. G. CANNING

AUTHOR OF "BRITISH POWER AND THOUGHT," "HISTORY IN FACT AND FICTION," "THE DIVIDED IRISH," ETC., ETC.

"Highest among those who have exhibited human nature by means of dialogue, stands Shakespeare. His variety is like the variety of Nature, endless diversity, scarcely any monstrosity."
—MACAULAY'S *Essay on Madame D'Arblay.*

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SHAKESPEARE STUDIED

IN EIGHT PLAYS

9

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

THE fourteenth Earl of Derby, in his learned translation of Homer's *Iliad*, feared that the taste for classical literature was declining in Britain. In his preface to the fifth edition of his translation,[1] however, while gratified at the success of his labours, he retracted this opinion with evident satisfaction. It is indeed remarkable how many learned influential Englishmen during the nineteenth century have proclaimed their admiration for Greek and Roman literature. While Lord Derby and Mr Gladstone dwelt chiefly on Greek writers, Macaulay often alludes to both Greek and Roman literature in his essays and English History. In his beautiful poem, *The Lays of Ancient Rome*, he enters thoroughly into the spirit of classic times. Some previous British writers had greatly contributed to inspire a taste for classic literature, but usually in a more cold, unsympathetic manner. Bacon, in his "Wisdom of the Ancients," Ben Jonson and Addison, in their tragedies of *Sejanus* and *Cato*, alike showed their interest in classic times and personages, as did the French dramatists, Corneille and Racine. But Shakespeare was perhaps the first, at least among British dramatists, to describe Greeks and Romans according to nature. He presents them as living realities before a reading public. Jonson, in his remarkable tragedy of *Sejanus*, describes that unfortunate Roman statesman once the chief minister

[1] Published in 1865.

of Tiberius Cæsar and the patron of Pontius Pilate, for a short time all-powerful in Rome, yet fated to be executed at the instigation of his despotic, suspicious sovereign. The noble words of the French poets, Corneille and Racine, in their classic dramas, never inspire their personages with the life, vigour, and interest with which Shakespeare and Jonson endowed their personages. Yet in every respect Shakespeare, in knowledge of character, originality, power of language, and depth of thought, infinitely excels his contemporary. Though Shakespeare is generally believed to have had little classical education, his exceptional genius and knowledge of human nature enable him to describe people of all ages and countries with a profound knowledge, insight, force, and interest never equalled by other writers, who yet had far more acquaintance with, or experience of, national distinctions, local particulars, and historical events. His play of *Troilus and Cressida*, laid in Troy, describes to some extent the memorable siege of Troy by the Greeks. It is by no means among the best of Shakespeare's classical dramas; neither it nor *Timon of Athens* portray the ancient Greeks with the same interest and power with which their Roman successors are described in the magnificent plays of *Julius Cæsar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. Yet *Troilus and Cressida* contains some noble passages which are to this day remembered and admired. Thus of all Shakespeare's lines none for its length is more known and repeated than:

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

These words are spoken by the sage Greek warrior Ulysses, and the great truth they express is transmitted in Shakespeare's matchless words to most civilised peoples of the present time. They are attributed to the Greek chief, who with the king, Agamemnon, and the other chiefs, Achilles and Ajax, besiege Troy, then ruled by an aged king, Priam. This old monarch with his valiant sons, Hector, Troilus and Paris, defend their unfortunate city with a determined valour, which rivalled that of the besieging Greeks.

Little if any partiality is shown by Shakespeare in describing either Greeks or Trojans. Indeed from his account they rather resemble each other. Equally brave and patriotic, they are opposed in a conflict which, by Homer's genius, is transmitted from generation to generation of civilised men. Among wise, shrewd Greek statesmen and brave warriors one peculiar extraordinary personage, Thersites, appears, a sarcastic, bitter misanthrope. Though himself a Greek, he takes a strange moody delight in insulting and scorning the Greek leaders. According to him, the wise old Nestor is a "stale old mouse-eaten dry cheese," Ulysses a "dog-fox," while Ajax and Achilles are "two curs." Shakespeare closely follows Homer in describing this worthy.

> "Only Thersites with unmeasured words,
> Of which he had good store to rate the chiefs
> Not over seemly but wherewith he thought
> To rouse the crowd to laughter brawled aloud
> Against Achilles and Ulysses most,
> His bolt was turned, on them his venom poured."
> —*Iliad*, Book II. (Lord Derby's Translation).

He considers Troilus a young Trojan ass, and Cressida certainly no better than she should be. This singular play ends with the death of the heroic Hector slain by Achilles, while the deaths of Troilus and Thersites, also slain by Achilles, are not mentioned. The play abounds with stirring incident, heroic characters, and occasional specimens of Shakespeare's reflective wisdom, especially in the speeches of Nestor and of Ulysses, the old and the comparatively young Greek leaders. The latter's words, maintaining the necessity of "degree, priority, and place," are worthy of the ablest statesman in ancient or modern times, which they likely have often uttered or acknowledged, but in Shakespeare's poetic language they appeal to all men of sense irrespective of country or historical position.

> "Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark what discord follows.
> Strength should be lord of imbecility,
> And the rude son should strike his father dead:
> Force should be right; or rather right and wrong,

Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
Then everything includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite;
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up himself."

None of the heathen deities Homer describes taking part in the siege are introduced by Shakespeare. The sympathy of the sea-king Neptune, and of Juno with the Greeks, and the latter's hatred of the unfortunate Trojans, so beautifully described by Homer and Virgil, are not mentioned by the English poet. With Shakespeare the tremendous contest lies exclusively between man and man, like the long subsequent wars he describes between English and French, and between the rival English factions of York and Lancaster. The idea of divine partiality towards mortals in Pagan conception was so essentially different from Christian belief that Shakespeare apparently avoided introducing it, though a Pagan poet would perhaps have done so. In most other respects this remarkable play may represent with much truth the traditions of the ancient classic writers. The reader finds himself all at once among really human characters, though placed in positions which no modern could completely realise, yet which might well have been transmitted by legend or tradition. There is little, if any, description of local scenery, dress, armour, or military weapons. The personages but for their names and a few local allusions might have been English, yet are described with that profound knowledge of human nature, in which Shakespeare has never been equalled, or perhaps much resembled. Macaulay impressively observes:

"*Troilus and Cressida* is perhaps of all the plays of Shakespeare that which is commonly considered as the most incorrect. Yet it seems to us infinitely more correct, in the sound sense of the term, than what is called the most correct plays of the most correct dramatists. We are sure that the Greeks of Shakespeare bear a far greater resemblance than the Greeks of Racine to the real Greeks, who besieged Troy, and for this reason, that the Greeks of

Shakespeare are human beings, and the Greeks of Racine mere names, mere words printed in capitals at the head of paragraphs of declamation."[1]

The siege of Troy beyond any other siege recorded in history has claimed the enduring attention and interest of ancient, mediæval, and modern times. Its magnificent description in Homer's *Iliad*, and the interesting allusions to it in Virgil's *Æneid*, where fugitive Trojans are considered ancestors of the Romans, have always given this famous siege a special interest and importance for both poets and historians. Shakespeare says little about some of the chief personages. Paris and Helen are seldom introduced, and described as merely sentimental lovers; the prophetess Cassandra excites but slight interest; while Cressida, though giving her name to the play, hardly deserves the name of heroine. Troilus, though eloquently described by greater men, is made of less importance than Nestor, Achilles, Thersites, Ulysses, and Hector. These men apparently interest Shakespeare most, yet he leaves the terrible contest between Greeks and Trojans undecided; though the narrated death of the chief Trojan champion, Hector, indicates the likely result of a complete Greek triumph. Shakespeare, in his lively prologue to this rather heavy play, admits that it only gives a sketch of the famous siege.

> "Our play
> Leaps o'er the vaunt and firstlings of those broils,
> Beginning in the middle; starting thence away
> To what may be digested in a play.
> Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are:
> Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war."

Though this play describes a most exciting, interesting time, it has not quite the vivid interest of some others of Shakespeare's classical plays. There is no very interesting female character, while the men, though uttering many noble speeches and wise reflections, are hardly as life-like as Julius Cæsar, Antony, or Brutus. It is to the Greeks that Shakespeare ascribes most of the wise,

[1] Essay on "Moore's Life of Byron."

thoughtful, and noble utterances contained in this play. Mr Lecky is evidently surprised—

"That within the narrow limits and scanty population of the Greek states should have arisen men who in almost every conceivable form of genius have attained almost or altogether the highest limits of human perfection."[1]

The sage philosophy of this celebrated nation, to this day so admired in civilised countries, may likely have induced Shakespeare to attribute to Ulysses, Achilles, and Nestor the wisest thoughts, while describing the Trojans, Æneas and Hector, as brave warriors, but rarely sharing the philanthropic wisdom which so eminently distinguishes the Greeks of antiquity. Thus Achilles philosophically exclaims, though perhaps in words which Shakespeare alone would choose:

"'Tis certain greatness, once fall'n out with fortune,
Must fall out with men too: what the declined is
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others
As feel in his own fall; for men, like butterflies,
Show not their mealy wings but to the summer,
And not a man for being simply man,
Hath any honour, but honour for those honours
That are without him, as place, riches, and favour,
Prizes of accident as oft as merit:
Which when they fall, as being slippery standers,
The love that lean'd on them as slippery too,
Doth one pluck down another, and together
Die in the fall."

—Act III. 3.

His noble comrade Ulysses fully rivals Achilles in wisdom as in valour. Both are supposed to utter their philosophic speeches during the siege of Troy, which they are conducting with the most energetic ardour. They evidently turn aside from their grand object for a brief space to utter words of profound wisdom, certainly more worthy of Socrates, Plato, and other great thinkers than of military officers engaged in all the duties, cares, risks, and dangers of their perilous profession. Yet to them Shakespeare ascribes his own calm reflections and extraordinary knowledge of mankind, which, considering his obscure position in England, can never cease to be

[1] "European Morals," vol. i. p. 418.

nearly as much wondered at as admired by thoughtful readers. Ulysses rejoins, partly perhaps in soliloquy:

> "For Time is like a fashionable host,
> That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand,
> And with his arms outstretch'd, as he would fly,
> Grasps in the comer; welcome ever smiles,
> And farewell goes out sighing. O! let not virtue seek
> Remuneration for the thing it was;
> For beauty, wit,
> High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,
> Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
> To envious and calumniating Time."

These grand words expressing some of the wisest thoughts of men were thus presented to the English public, and subsequently spread to most civilised nations, through the medium of translation and the diffusion of literary enquiry. The only comic personage except Pandarus in this martial play is the odious, grim, repulsive cynic, Thersites. This luckless victim of his own sarcastic gibes gets beaten and abused by his fellow Greeks, while their language to him and his to them is really more coarse and scurrilous than really witty. Though the alleged cause of the Trojan war is the elopement of Helen, wife to the Greek chief, Menelaus, with the Trojan prince, Paris, yet these three personages take little part in this play. The prophetess Cassandra, sister to Paris, foretells the ruin of Troy unless Helen is given up to the Greeks, but she is unheeded, and the terrible war proceeds, while the eloping pair, who are the cause of it, have sentimental conversations together. Paris calls her "My Nell" after winning over his brothers Hector and Troilus to take his part in withholding her from her Greek husband, but Helen, though in such a strange position between fierce warriors and their contending followers, is not made a very interesting personage, and can hardly be ranked among Shakespeare's attractive heroines.

There are really no very interesting female characters in this play. Its main interest is among a few Greek and Trojan warriors. Paris, a gay, sentimental, and rather weak man, in eloquent words entreats Helen to dissuade his brother Hector from the war.

"Sweet Helen I must woo you
To help unarm our Hector: his stubborn buckles,
With these your white enchanting fingers touch'd
Shall more obey than to the edge of steel,
Or force of Greekish sinews; you shall do more
Than all the island kings—disarm great Hector.

Helen replies:

"'Twill make us proud to be his servant, Paris;
Yea, what he shall receive of us in duty
Gives us more palm in beauty than we have,
Yea, overshines itself."

The enamoured Paris only answers:

"Sweet, above thought I love thee." —Act III.

This unfortunate pair are apparently made of weaker stuff than the fierce soldiers and sage, crafty statesmen who surround them. The part they both bear in this play indeed is weak, if not childish, resembling their traditionary description in Homer's *Iliad*. The disarming of Hector, however, is a mere fancy, as both Greeks and Trojans are bent on war. Martial emulation or rivalry inspires nearly all the chief characters, and the observant thoughtful Ulysses, instead of counselling peace, describes the warlike qualities of young Troilus with the mingled approval of a soldier and the discrimination of a statesman:

"Not yet mature, yet matchless; firm of word,
Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue;
Not soon provoked nor being provoked soon calm'd:[1]
His heart and hand both open and both free;
For what he has he gives, what thinks he shows;
Yet gives he not till judgment guide his bounty,
Nor dignifies an impure thought with breath."

Troilus really seems more worthy, brilliant, and admirable from this splendid description pronounced by the wise Ulysses, than from anything he says or does in the play. Many noble thoughts or grand ideas that Shakespeare ascribes to Greeks and Trojans are perhaps more the natural growth of his own extraordinary mind than derived from historical proof. It can never cease to be a

[1] Shakespeare expresses a rather similar idea in the celebrated advice of Polonius to his son, Laertes, in *Hamlet*.

"Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in
Bear it that thy opponent may beware of thee."

subject of surprise, how Shakespeare, during the stormy reign of Queen Elizabeth, when little consideration was shown by opposing parties despite their common Christianity, yet consistently evinces the noblest sentiments inspired by the faith. The venerable Greek general Nestor thus addresses his heroic young foe Hector, recognising his many virtues in a spirit far different from the vindictive yet conscientious bitterness shown towards noble opponents during the civil and religious wars in British history :

"I have, thou gallant Trojan, seen thee oft,
. . . . . .
When thou hast hung thy advanced sword i' th' air,
Not letting it decline on the declined ;
That I have said to some my standers by.
'Lo ! Jupiter is yonder, dealing life.'
. . . . . .
But this thy countenance, still lock'd in steel,
I never saw till now."

Hector nobly answers his venerable foe :

"Let me embrace thee, good old chronicle,
That hast so long walked hand in hand with Time."

Nestor :

"I would my arms could match thee in contention,
As they contend with thee in courtesy." —Act IV.

Students even of British history will rarely find mercy to "the declin'd" shown, at least not in civil wars, from early times till the last Jacobite revolts of 1715-45 inclusive. In fact, the legalised severities of British rulers and warriors towards defeated fellow-countrymen, seem at times to have rather exceeded that shown towards vanquished foes in foreign lands. British rule abroad, though of course more of late than formerly, has usually tended to mercy after victory, which policy may be pronounced practically rewarded by the proved loyalty of so many subjected nations. But in Shakespeare's time, and for centuries later, the noble sentiments he attributes to these Pagan Greeks and Trojans are hardly to be found in the spirit of either British or foreign legislation in dealing with foes abroad or rebels at home. The fierce spirit of Troilus was oftener shown during many Christian contests between even fellow-countrymen than the clemency of the generous Hector, so

praised by the noble old Greek Nestor. Thus Troilus says scornfully to his brother:

"When many times the captive Grecian falls,
Even in the fan and wind of your fair sword,
You bid them rise and live."

Hector:

"Oh! 'tis fair play."

Troilus:

"Fool's play, by heaven, Hector."

Hector, shocked as well as irritated, answers:

"How now! how now!"

His relentless brother proceeds in the usual spirit of ferocious warfare:

"For the love of all the gods,
Let's leave the hermit pity with our mothers,
And when we have our armours buckled on,
The venom'd vengeance ride upon our swords,
Spur them to ruthful work, rein them from ruth.

Hector indignant, but unable to restrain or influence him, naturally exclaims:

"Fie, savage, fie!" —Act V.

While the brave Greeks and Trojans are in the midst of war, the scurrilous, perhaps cowardly, Thersites abuses or sneers at all around him, receiving hard knocks and reproaches from his fellow Greeks, without apparently incurring suspicion as a traitor. He finally meets the heroic Hector, who exclaims:

"What art thou, Greek? Art thou for Hector's match?
Art thou of blood and honour?"

Thersites mockingly answers:

"No, no; I am a rascal; a scurvy railing knave; a very filthy rogue."

Hector, with contempt, retorts:

"I do believe thee: live."

and scornfully leaves him, when Thersites, evidently relieved, says:

"God-a-mercy, that thou wilt believe me; but a plague break thy neck for frighting me!" —Act V. Scene IV.

This strange being shows some of the caustic shrewdness without the good-humour of Falstaff, but he seems in this play, as in the *Iliad*, to be of little consequence to any one. It seems improbable that the brave fiery warriors whom he often insults would long have endured his presence among them, but to some extent his odd sarcasms rather enliven this play. The slaying of the Greek hero Patroclus by Hector rouses his friend Achilles to revenge on the latter. As in history, the brave yet merciful Trojan is slain by this Greek warrior, but the subsequent capture of Troy is not mentioned. Shakespeare leaves the awful contest still raging, though the Greeks are in the full career of victory. The celebrated Trojan, Æneas, destined to future fame, though occasionally introduced, takes less part in this play than either Hector, Troilus, or the chief Greek leaders. His escape from Troy with a band of Trojan fugitives and their wonderful adventures before settling in Italy are never foretold. This drama, though so full of heroic characters and incidents, may be said to end rather abruptly, while Greeks and Trojans are continuing their desperate struggle. This extraordinary war, at first so celebrated in Homer's immortal poem, has preserved a peculiar charm and attraction throughout the civilised world, especially in England and Germany from ancient times to the present day. While Homer adorns his wonderful poem by introducing Pagan gods and goddesses, opposing each other in the contest between Greek and Trojan mortals, Shakespeare, appealing to the sense of mankind in modern times, inspires his personages with philosophic wisdom worthy of any civilised age or country, but he cares little for local description or national peculiarity. Thus, when the three Trojan brothers, Paris, Troilus, and Hector, argue together about restoring Helen to her Greek husband, Menelaus, and preventing the Trojan war, the enthusiasm of Paris and the wisdom of Hector are contrasted with the full force of Shakespeare's genius. Paris exclaims:

> "There's not the meanest spirit on our party
> Without a heart to dare or sword to draw
> When Helen is defended,

Then I say,
Well may we fight for her whom we know well,
The world's large spaces cannot parallel."

Hector calmly replies:

"The reasons you alleged do more conduce
To the hot passion of distemper'd blood
Than to make up a free determination
'Twixt right and wrong; for pleasure and revenge
Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice
Of any true decision." —Act II.

These words and style of reasoning are from Shakespeare's own mind, and would seem to bear little resemblance that can be proved to the ideas of the ancient nations. No people but Greeks and Trojans are introduced in this drama. Though its personages appear natural and life-like when compared to the formal classic plays of French writers, yet it may be doubted if they much resemble either the Greeks or Trojans of reality. They are graphic, consistent, powerful descriptions of persons in a peculiar historical position, with classic names and surroundings, yet they might represent the heroic, wise, and ambitious men of any civilised country. It seems doubtful whether Shakespeare sides with either Greeks or Trojans, he seems thoroughly impartial in their moral delineation.

"Equalities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety,"

are words in *King Lear*, which may perhaps apply to Shakespeare's description of these two nations. The fierce rivalry between Troilus and the Greek Diomed about Cressida, hardly makes any of the three very interesting. She apparently prefers Diomed, as she exclaimed to Troilus when Diomed leaves her for a time:

"Troilus, farewell! one eye yet looks on thee,
But with my heart the other eye did see.
Ah! poor our sex; this fault in us I find,
The error of our eye directs our mind." —Act V.

In the hurry, excitement, and confusion of the great siege, however, this dispute between Diomed and Troilus leads to no result in this play, and at its close these chiefs,

heading their respective followers, are still contending, and Cressida herself does not appear again after these words. The far-famed Helen of Troy is merely presented as an incarnation of enchanting beauty, without either the talents of Cleopatra, or the virtues of Cordelia, Juliet, or Desdemona. In the *Iliad* Homer presents her during the siege meekly deploring to the old Trojan king Priam that she has been the cause of the Trojan war, and of so much misery to both Greeks and Trojans.

> "Before thy presence, father, I appear
> With conscious shame and reverential fear.
> Ah! had I died ere to these walls I fled,
> False to my country, and my nuptial bed.
> My brothers, friends, and daughter left behind,
> False to them and to Paris only kind!
> For this I mourn, till grief or dire disease
> Should waste the form whose crime it was to please."
> —*Iliad*, Book III. (Pope's Translation).

Lord Derby's version of this beautiful passage is truer to the original, but not in the same eloquent English.

> "With reverence, dearest father, and with shame
> I look on thee, oh! would that I had died
> That day when hither with thy son I came,
> And left my husband, friends, and darling child,
> And all the lov'd companions of my youth,
> That I died not, with grief I pine away."

These beautiful, pathetic words might well indicate a heroine. But in this play neither Helen nor Cressida is rendered very interesting, and, in fact, occupy in it a rather secondary position. Shakespeare chiefly delights in describing the wisdom, valour, and knowledge of human nature, which he attributes, perhaps rather more than they deserve, to the chief Greek and Trojan leaders. In their magnificent words and speeches lies the chief value of this play. Yet even their grand ideas we owe to Shakespeare, and can hardly be proved as altogether confirmed by all that is recorded of these heroes, however brave and sagacious they may have been. In examining classic records and collating them with Shakespeare's language, Dr Johnson's words, when comparing Pope's translation

of the *Iliad* with its original, may perhaps to some extent be applied:

"Many readers of the English *Iliad* when they have been touched with some unexpected beauty of the lighter kind, have tried to enjoy it in the original, where, alas! it was not to be found, but to have added can be no great crime, if nothing be taken away."[1]

Most historical personages in Shakespeare's plays have indeed more reason to be grateful, than dissatisfied, with his attractive representations of their words and deeds. It will always be a cause of wonder how Shakespeare, living in political if not social obscurity, passing his time between the London theatres and Stratford-on-Avon, and who, as far as it is known, was never out of England, was yet able to describe classic and historical personages as naturally as if he had known them, or discovered some secret correspondence revealing their true characters. Neither profound learning, travelling, or acquaintance with distinguished people of his own time fell to the lot of William Shakespeare. He rather resembles his exquisite description of Cardinal Wolsey:

> "Not propp'd by ancestry whose grace,
> Chalks successors their way, neither allied
> To eminent assistants, but spider-like
> Out of his self-drawing web, he gives us note,
> The force of his own merit makes his way."
>
> —*Henry VIII.*, Act I.

Shakespeare's knowledge of men was evidently not due to much learning, travelling, nor to distinguished friends. It was, in fact, one of the most remarkable exceptions ever known to all those rules of general education, and social advantage, to which most celebrated men "amid their brethren mortal" have owed their greatness in all ages and countries. In this play Hector may perhaps be considered as the real hero. He does not indeed utter the wise reflections of Nestor and of Ulysses, but in bravery and generosity he is superior to either friends or foes. Æneas is not very closely described, though

[1] Johnson's "Life of Pope."

often mentioned, yet it was his romantic destiny to plant the fugitive Trojans in Italy, while their descendants were to become the Roman conquerors of all those lands, which in their time were supposed to comprise the whole civilised world. The band of Trojan fugitives accompanying the defeated hero in his famous voyage, first to North Africa and then to Italy, so beautifully described by Virgil, were thus alleged—though the assertion may not be exactly capable of proof—to be the ancestry of that martial yet philanthropic race, whose mission was to inform and enlighten as well as to conquer. In their wide and varied empire was included Judea, in which comparatively small province was fated to arise the prevailing religion of modern times.

Before its almost miraculous diffusion the Paganism of Troy, Greece, and Rome, together with that of northern Europe, practically vanished completely. Thus the faiths of Jupiter and of Odin, whose votaries once comprised some of the bravest and wisest of men, have for many centuries not retained, as far as can be known, a single believer. Though Homer and Virgil describe the Pagan deities as taking an active part, and often opposed to each other in the Trojan war and in subsequent human history, and though their existence and power were evidently believed in by some of the wisest of men, there would appear no very precise historical statement or positive allegation of their being ever seen by mortals. They appear chiefly, if not entirely, in poetry, as neither Greek or Roman historians and philosophers announce their actual appearance in this world as historically proved, or at least, not in a circumstantial manner. They would seem the invisible though trusted and revered creations of the human intellect alone.[1] In *Troilus and Cressida*

[1] "Whence the gods severally sprang, whether or no they had all existed from eternity—these are questions of which the Greeks knew nothing until the other day. Homer and Hesiod were the first to give the gods their epithets, to allot them their several offices and occupations and describe their forms, and they lived but four hundred years before my time, as I believe."—"Herodotus," Book II., on "Egypt." (Rawlinson's Translation.)

neither the Greeks nor the Trojans, though believing in the same faith, make many appeals to their gods.

Their blessing or favour is never implored with the intense earnestness with which they were probably addressed at this time by their contending votaries. Shakespeare, in fact, rather avoids making much allusion to the heathen mythology throughout this play, though among the combatants it was likely a theme of constant interest and anxiety. Throughout the modern civilised world the religions of Greece, Rome, and Scandinavia have long been viewed as mere fables, unworthy of the least confidence, yet the history, poetry, and philosophy of Pagan Greece and Rome remain still the study and admiration of the most learned men at the present time. The famous siege of Troy, so poetically celebrated in Homer, is again seen, as it were, only in glimpses throughout *Troilus and Cressida*. Yet in these glimpses the spirit, wisdom, and valour of the mighty dead are again recalled to actual life, interest and glory, by the genius of England's greatest poet. The combination of sound common-sense, knowledge of character, and power of fancy is among the chief merits of the immortal *Iliad*. The story of *Troilus and Cressida* which Shakespeare has chosen to dramatise is only one, and by no means the most interesting of the events during that extraordinary siege. The real Troilus was slain by Achilles, who seems to have killed more Trojan leaders than any of his Greek comrades succeeded in doing.

Troilus, the hero of this play is by no means among its most interesting characters. He is far inferior to his brother Hector, and to his Greek foes, Achilles, Nestor, and Ulysses. Agamemnon, the Greek king, is also made of less interest than these four chiefs. He moves about a stolid figure, gives orders, and is obeyed, but none of his words equal those of Achilles, Nestor, and Ulysses in real wisdom or eloquence. This play seems a rather unfinished description of a most eventful and stirring time. At its close Troy still holds out, and all is left

in battle and confusion, though the Greeks are evidently winning all along the line. It is certainly a brilliant sketch of grand scenes and of grand characters. Shakespeare displays this graphic play like a picture, ending it amid exciting undecided events. The wise chiefs Ulysses and Nestor, the gay Paris, the stern Achilles, and the heroic yet merciful Hector, present a strange contrast to the comic if not cowardly Pandarus, and to the grotesque, insolent, and odious Thersites. These personages are placed before an English reading public as if many of their words and deeds had been revealed by an acquaintance; yet only a very brief part of their lives is shown. We see Greeks and Trojans alive, full of spirit, wisdom, and energy, but withdrawn from view, in the midst, or at least before the end of their memorable contest. The last scene shows Æneas lamenting Hector's death, foreseeing the ruin of Troy, and anticipating some vague future revenge on the Greeks which in process of time may to some extent have been fulfilled according to Roman belief in their Trojan descent and in the triumph of their empire over Greece. Troilus finally appears upbraiding Pandarus, Cressida's uncle, who has failed to reconcile them, though in reality he was a brave warrior.

Troilus:

> "Hence broker-lackey! ignominy and shame
> Pursue thy life and live aye with thy name." [*Exit.*

Pandarus, who, though made partly comic in this play, was really a gallant warrior, exclaims when alone:

> "A goodly medicine for my aching bones!"

and then ends this play with some fantastic lines composed evidently to amuse an English audience:

> "O world, world, world! thus is the poor agent despised!
> Some two months hence my will shall here be made:
> It should be now, but that my fear is this,
> Some galled goose of Winchester would hiss.
> Till then I'll sweat, and seek about for eases;
> And at that time bequeath you my diseases." [*Exit.*

These lines form a rather strange, if not grotesque

ending to this martial heroic play, which, though containing some magnificent passages, does not, on the whole, seem written in the poet's best style.

Yet the story of *Troilus and Cressida* evidently interested Shakespeare especially, as he again alludes to it in these beautiful lines;

> "The moon shines bright—in such a night as this
> When the sweet wind did sweetly kiss the trees
> And they did make no noise—in such a night
> Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls
> And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents
> Where Cressid lay that night."
>
> *Merchant of Venice*, Act V. Scene i.

TIMON OF ATHENS

IN this instructive, but in some respects revolting tragedy, Shakespeare apparently describes Timon, the Athenian millionaire, rather differently from the account given by some historical authorities.[1] According to them, Timon was always a hater or despiser of mankind, while Shakespeare represents him at first as a too bountiful patron or benefactor to all around him. The ingratitude he encounters makes him change his nature and practically believe that "all men are liars," yet not in the excited "haste" admitted by the impulsive Jewish psalmist, in this terrible condemnation, but as the final morose conviction of an imprudent spendthrift. Shakespeare's Timon, a rich Athenian, first appears feasting, patronising and making presents alike to artists and to personal acquaintances. A needy poet, to some extent describes and foretells Timon's character, and probable future, fairly enough, yet really does nothing of service to his patron. He says to a brother artist, a painter, who also, with many others, seeks Timon's patronage at the latter's house:

> "You see how all conditions, how all minds, tender down
> . . . . . .
> Their services to Lord Timon: his large fortune,
> Upon his good and gracious nature hanging,
> Subdues and properties to his love and tendance
> All sorts of hearts; yea, from the glass-faced flatterer
> To Apemantus, that few things loves better
> Than to abhor himself: even he drops down
> The knee before him."

This Apemantus is a churlish, sneering, cold-hearted hater of mankind, perhaps slightly resembling Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida*, hated of all and hating. In history he is represented as friendly to Timon, but Shakespeare

[1] See Lempriere's "Classical Dictionary."

describes him as without sympathy for any one. The poet proceeds, explaining his professional intentions to his brother artist, the painter:

"Sir, I have upon a high and pleasant hill,
Feign'd Fortune to be throned: the base o' the mount
Is rank'd with all deserts, all kind of natures,
That labour on the bosom of this sphere,
. . . . . .
One do I personate of Lord Timon's frame,
Whom Fortune with her ivory hand wafts to her."

Painter:

"This Throne, this Fortune, and this hill, methinks
With one man beckon'd from the rest below, would be well expressed
In our condition."

Poet:

"Nay, sir, but hear me on.
All those which were his fellows but of late,
Follow his strides, his lobbies fill with tendance,
Rain sacrificial whisperings in his ear,
Make sacred even his stirrup, and through him
Drink the free air."

Painter:

"Ay, marry, what of these?"

Poet:

"When Fortune in her shift and change of mood,
Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependants
Which labour'd after him to the mountain's top,
Even on their knees and hands, let him slip down,
Not one accompanying his declining foot."

Painter:

"A thousand moral paintings I can show,
That shall demonstrate these quick blows of Fortune's
More pregnantly than words."

Timon himself now appears, beset by different applicants for relief, patronage, or assistance. With generous credulity, he grants almost everything his various suitors request. Among many others, the painter offers his picture, and Timon says:

"The painting is almost the natural man;
And you shall find I like it: wait attendance
Till you hear further from me."

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The poet previously presented his offer, and Timon answers in a similar strain:

> "I thank you; you shall hear from me anon:
> Go not away."

Soon after the odious cynic Apemantus appears, and has a strange talk with the kind, too generous Timon, whose prodigality is hastening his ruin by leaps and bounds. Apemantus, full of scorn and bitterness, and without a particle of real charity, ridicules all around him, poets, painters, and merchants, with all the coarse insolence of a thoroughly hardened embittered nature, when the brave Alcibiades, a grand contrast to him, appears before Timon. This remarkable man, once a pupil of the wise and good Socrates, is, in some respects, the noblest character in the play. He admires, even appreciates, the generous spirit of Timon, yet is for some time absorbed in Athenian politics, and during that time the unsuspicious Timon lavishes away his money in all directions. He gives a rich banquet, to which the reckless prodigal even invites Apemantus, while Alcibiades and other Athenian lords are also present. At this feast Apemantus is the last to appear, when the generous Timon exclaims:

> "O! Apemantus, you are welcome."

Apemantus grimly replies:

> "No; you shall not make me welcome:
> I come to have thee thrust me out of doors."

Timon, thinking to please everybody, then says:

> "Fie! thou'rt a churl;
> . . . . . .
> Go, let him have a table by himself,
> For he does neither affect company,
> Nor is he fit for it indeed."

Apemantus:

> "I come to observe; I give thee fair warning on't."

Timon good-naturedly retorts:

"I take no heed of thee; thou'rt an Athenian; therefore welcome. Prithee, let my meat make thee silent."

Apemantus:

"I scorn thy meat; t'would choke me.
. . . . . .
O you gods! what a number
Of men eat Timon, and he sees 'em not!"

This is true enough, but there is no friendship in Apemantus. He scorns everybody and everything, and says in a sort of mock prayer,

"Immortal gods, I crave no pelf;
I pray for no man but myself:
Grant I may never prove so fond,
To trust man on his oath or bond."

Timon, full of hospitality, addresses his different guests, and exclaims to the most distinguished one:

"Captain Alcibiades, your heart's in the field now."

The other, though always a brave, ambitious soldier, courteously replies:

"My heart is ever at your service, my lord."

Timon, knowing his martial nature, rejoins:

"You had rather be at a breakfast of enemies than a dinner of friends."

Alcibiades, a thorough warrior, replies:

"So they were bleeding-new, my lord, there's no meat like 'em: I could wish my best friend at such a feast."

Apemantus, with the bitterness of a thorough hater of mankind, exclaims, but no one heeds him:

"Would all those flatterers were thine enemies then, that then thou might'st kill 'em, and bid me to 'em."

The kind and noble-hearted Timon, a complete contrast to all present, believes they are each attached to him, or trusty friends, and in a general speech says:

"O you gods! think I, what need we have any friends, if we should ne'er have need of 'em? They were the most needless creatures living, should we ne'er have use for 'em, and would most resemble sweet instruments hung up in cases, that keep their sounds to themselves. We are born to do benefits; and what better or properer can we call our own than the riches of our friends? O! what a precious comfort 'tis, to have so many, like brothers, commanding one another's fortunes!"

During this outburst of generous feeling and kindly

sentiment, Timon is heard in silence by Alcibiades, while his other guests enjoy themselves, and Apemantus sneers at every one. A fair bevy of ladies, led by the God of Love, Cupid, now appears, the latter with merriment exclaims:

"Hail to thee, worthy Timon; and to all
That of his bounties taste! The five best senses
Acknowledge thee their patron. The ear,
Taste, touch, and smell, pleased from thy table rise;
They only now come but to feast thine eyes."

Timon hospitably replies:

"They're welcome all."

A joyous dance ensues, while the cynic Apemantus says, perhaps to himself alone:

"They dance! they are mad women.
Like madness is the glory of this life,
We make ourselves fools to disport ourselves."

Timon then compliments the dancers, and bids them partake of his banquet. They retire to it with thanks, and Flavius, Timon's honest steward, enters, whom his prodigal master bids fetch him a casket of jewels. Flavius says to himself at this command:

"More jewels yet!
There is no crossing him in's humour."

Timon is then presented with four white horses from a friend, and invited to a hunt by another. He accepts both present and invitation, and orders the messengers to be all rewarded. Flavius, who alone has Timon's true interests at heart, and knows his circumstances, alarmed at such extravagance, exclaims to himself:

"What will this come to?
He commands us to provide, and give great gifts,
And all out of an empty coffer:
. . . . . .
His promises fly so beyond his state
That what he speaks is all in debt; he owes
For every word:
. . . . . .
I bleed inwardly for my lord."

He departs full of pity for his reckless employer, who

addresses his parting guests in kind words, never suspecting their ingratitude.

> "'Tis not enough to give;
> Methinks I could deal kingdoms to my friends,
> And ne'er be weary."

He then addresses the most formidable man among them, who, absorbed in ambition and politics, rather admires Timon, but has little in common with him:

> "Alcibiades,
> Thou art a soldier, therefore seldom rich;
> It comes in charity to thee; for all thy living
> Is 'mongst the dead, and all the lands thou hast
> Lie in a pitch'd field."

Alcibiades, with more secret meaning than is guessed by the present company, replies, alluding to the state of Athens:

> "Ay, defiled land, my lord."

In these brief words Alcibiades apparently reveals hostility to the existing State, but he says no more. Though infinitely superior to Timon's other guests in genius, sense, and policy, he keeps his own counsel, watching all around him with suppressed contempt. He and the other lords leave Timon alone for a short time with the grim cynic, Apemantus, who foretells in bitter words Timon's coming ruin, but seems himself incapable of pity for any one.

Apemantus:

> "Thus honest fools lay out their wealth on court'sies."

Timon, wishing to be kind to every one, meekly replies:

> "Now, Apemantus, if thou wert not sullen, I would be good to thee."

Apemantus:

> "No, I'll nothing; for if I should be bribed too, there would be none left to rail upon thee. . . . . What need these feasts, pomps, and vain-glories?"

Timon:

> "Nay, an' you begin to rail on society once, I am sworn not to give regard you to. Farewell; and come with better music." [*Exit.*

Apemantus:

"So:
Thou wilt not hear me now; thou shalt not then;
I'll lock thy heaven from thee." [*Exit.*

The many claimants on Timon's bounty become more and more importunate. Thus the next act opens with a scene in an Athenian senator's house, who thus describes Timon's extravagance, more in scorn than charity:

"And late, five thousand: to Varro and to Isidore
He owes nine thousand; besides my former sum,
Which makes it five-and-twenty. Still in motion
Of raging waste! It cannot hold; it will not.
If I want gold, steal but a beggar's dog
And give it Timon, why the dog coins gold."

This anxious creditor then sends a messenger, named Caphis, to demand his money from Timon:

"Importune him for my moneys; be not ceased
With slight denial, nor then silenced when—
'*Commend me to your master*'—and the cap
Plays in the right hand, thus; but tell him,
My uses cry to me; I must serve my turn
Out of mine own; his days and times are past,
And my reliance on his fracted dates
Have smit my credit: Get you gone:
Put on a most importunate aspect,
. . . . . .
A visage of demand: Get you gone."

In the next scene Flavius, hitherto always disregarded by his thoughtless master, thus reveals his thoughts, while holding many bills in his hands:

"No care, no stop! so senseless of expense,
That he will neither know how to maintain it,
Nor cease his flow of riot; takes no account
How things go from him.
. . . . . .
What shall be done: He will not hear, till feel.
I must be round with him."

Caphis, with messengers from the other creditors, now enters Timon's hall, pressing him for payment, while he is with Alcibiades and other Athenian lords. Alcibiades, however, regards this strange scene in silence; while Timon, finding these creditors persist in their demands,

asks his guests to withdraw for a short time, while summoning the faithful Flavius, and then foolishly asks him:

"How goes the world, that I am thus encounter'd
With clamorous demands?"

Flavius begs the creditors to retire for a time:

"Please you, gentlemen,
The time is unagreeable to this business:
Your importunacy cease till after dinner,
That I may make his lordship understand
Wherefore you are not paid."

Timon at once exclaims:

"Do so, my friends."

And then says to Flavius:

"See them well entertained."

He and Flavius then go out, and Apemantus with a fool or jester enters. The creditors' servants make jokes with these worthies, and at length all ask Apemantus a rather teasing question, which he quickly answers:

"What are we, Apemantus?"

Apemantus:

"Asses. That you ask me what you are, and do not know yourselves. Speak to 'em, fool."

The servants then ask the fool, apparently a lady's servant, how his mistress is, to which he replies, though without any real wit:

"She's e'en setting on water to scald such chickens as you are. Would we could see you at Corinth. . . . . Here comes my mistress' page."

This youth, evidently a sharp, impudent lad, exclaims to the fool, his fellow-servant:

"Why, how now, captain! what do you in this wise company? How dost thou, Apemantus?"

Evidently the scornful style of this boy annoys the old cynic more than his words, and he replies:

"Would I had a rod in my mouth, that I might answer thee profitably."

The page makes no reply to this wish, but asks him to

read some words on two letters, telling Apemantus that he himself cannot read. Apemantus, with his usual bitterness, rejoins:

"There will little learning die then that day thou art hanged. This is to Lord Timon; this Alcibiades. Go; thou wast born a bastard, and thou'lt die a bawd."

The page, as bold as brass, and evidently used to exchange compliments of this kind, retorts perhaps more in the style of a lad in the purlieus of London than from elegant Athens or Corinth:

"Thou wast whelped a dog, and thou shalt famish a dog's death. Answer not; I am gone."

And off he goes at once. Apemantus, the fool, and the servants then indulge in a strange conversation, in which there is not much wit, but a good deal of ribald coarseness, likely enough among such a party.

Fool:

"Are you three usurers' men?"

All the servants:

"Ay, fool."

To which admission the so-called fool replies:

"I think no usurer but has a fool to his servant: my mistress is one, and I am her fool. When men come to borrow of your masters, they approach sadly, and go away merry; but they enter my mistress' house merrily, and go away sadly: the reason of this?"

The servants refuse to gratify his curiosity, but shrewdly rejoin:

'Thou art not altogether a fool."

Timon and Flavius re-enter, and all others withdraw. Plain speaking now ensues, and the honest Flavius at length, alone with Timon, reveals the truth to his spendthrift master. Like, probably, some other men, when waking from a dream, Timon at first inclines to blame and suspect the best friend he has. He angrily asks Flavius why he was not told before of his debts, to which Flavius replies that Timon would never hear him.

"O my good lord!
At many times I brought in my accounts,
Laid them before you; you would throw them off,
. . . . . .
When for some trifling present you have bid me
Return so much, I have shook my head and wept;
Yea, 'gainst the authority of manners, pray'd you
To hold your hand more close: I did endure
Not seldom, nor no slight checks, when I have
Prompted you in the ebb of your estate,
And your great flow of debts. My loved lord,
Though you hear now, too late, yet now's a time,
The greatest of your having lacks a half
To pay your present debts."

Timon hastily exclaims, now evidently believing him:

"Let all my land be sold."

Flavius:

"'Tis all engaged, some forfeited and gone;
And what remains will hardly stop the mouth
Of present dues."

Timon:

"To Lacedæmon did my land extend."

Flavius:

"O my good lord! the world is but a word;
Were it all yours to give it in a breath,
How quickly were it gone!"

Timon, conscience-struck, exclaims:

"You tell me true?"

Flavius:

"If you suspect my husbandry or falsehood,
Call me before the exactest auditors,
And set me on the proof.
. . . . . .
Heavens! have I said, the bounty of this lord,
How many prodigal bits have slaves and peasants
This night englutted! Who is not Timon's?
Great Timon! noble, worthy, royal Timon!
Ah! when the means are gone that buy this praise,
The breath is gone whereof this praise is made;
Feast-won, fast-lost; one cloud of winter showers,
These flies are couch'd."

Timon, unable to deny, yet unwilling to hear, exclaims:

"Come, sermon me no further;
Unwisely, not ignobly, have I given.
Why dost thou weep? Canst thou the conscience lack,

To think I shall lack friends?
. . . . . .
You shall perceive how you
Mistake my fortunes; I am wealthy in my friends."

This talk between the prodigal employer and his faithful steward, though imputed to ancient Greeks at a remote period, really applies as much to people of the present time as to any other. The thoughts and feelings expressed in Shakespeare's grand poetic style are practically as modern as if published in a clever novel of the present day. Generous, wasteful prodigals, and the ungrateful recipients of their lavish bounty, always abound, especially in civilised countries, during the passing centuries, without apparently the lessons of time producing permanent effect. Shakespeare's words in this, as in other plays, dignify as much as illustrate the commonest transactions, qualities, and habits, while his views comprise human nature in all times, unrestrained or uninfluenced by local associations. This Athenian spendthrift, his false friends, and one true servant, might all be Englishmen at any period, as well as Greeks of ancient days. Shakespeare's task is to always examine mankind generally, while he comparatively ignores most national distinctions and peculiarities. Timon, after this talk with Flavius, eagerly sends for assistance to his numerous acquaintances, fully expecting immediate help. But Flavius, who well knows what they are, announces to his master:

"They answer in a joint and corporate voice,
That now they are at fall, want treasure, cannot
Do what they would; are sorry; you are honourable;
But yet they could have wish'd; they know not;
Something hath been amiss; a noble nature
May catch a wrench; would all were well; 'tis pity;
And so, intending other serious matters,
After distasteful looks and these hard fractions,
With certain half-caps and cold-moving nods,
They froze me into silence."

This news Timon hears amazed, but flatters himself that Flavius, having hitherto solicited only old men, his

younger acquaintances will prove more generous, and sends other servants to them, exclaiming:

"These old fellows
Have their ingratitude in them hereditary;
Their blood is caked, 'tis cold, it seldom flows."

Then addressing Flavius, who evidently thinks the young men no better than the old, he says:

"Ne'er speak or think
That Timon's fortunes 'mong his friends can sink."

The next act and scene show Flaminius, one of Timon's young servants, who rather resembles Flavius in pity for their master, at the house of Lucullus, one of Timon's younger acquaintances, who first asks his messenger:

"And how does that honourable, complete, free-hearted gentleman of Athens, thy very bountiful good lord and master? And what hast thou there under thy cloak?"

He evidently expects a present, but Flaminius makes a disappointing reply:

"Faith, nothing but an empty box, sir, which, in my lord's behalf, I come to entreat your honour to supply; who, having great and instant occasion to use fifty talents, hath sent to your lordship to furnish him, nothing doubting your present assistance therein."

Lucullus:

"La, la, la, la! '*nothing doubting*,' says he? Alas! good lord; a noble gentleman 'tis, if he would not keep so good a house. Many a time and often I ha' dined with him, and told him on't; and come again to supper to him, of purpose to have him spend less; and yet he would embrace no counsel, take no warning by my coming. Every man has his fault, and honesty[1] is his; I ha' told him on't, but I could ne'er get him from it. . . . . Draw nearer, honest Flaminius. Thy lord's a bountiful gentleman; but thou art wise, and thou knowest well enough, although thou comest to me, that this is no time to lend money, especially upon bare friendship, without security. Here's three solidares for thee; good boy, wink at me, and say thou sawest me not."

Flaminius indignantly rejects the money, when Lucullus hears him scornfully exclaiming:

"Ha! now I see thou art a fool, and fit for thy master."

The next scene introduces two or three strangers talking to Lucius, another of Timon's false friends. They

[1] Liberality.

tell Lucius that Timon has applied to Lucullus for assistance and was denied, at which Lucius pretends to be much shocked.

Lucius:

"Now, before the gods, I am ashamed on't. Denied that honourable man! . . . . I have received some small kindnesses from him, as money, plate, jewels, and such like trifles, nothing comparing to his; yet, had he mistook him and sent to me, I should ne'er have denied his occasion so many talents."

Servilius, another of Timon's servants, perhaps not so faithful as Flaminius, now enters, addressing Lucius:

"May it please your honour, my lord hath sent——"

Lucius evidently anticipating a present, eagerly interrupts him,

"Ha! what has he sent? I am so much endeared to that lord; he's ever sending: how shall I thank him, thinkest thou? And what has he sent now?"

Servilius explains that poor Timon requests help instead of sending gifts. Lucius at first disbelieves this, exclaiming:

"Dost thou speak seriously, Servilius?"

Servilius:

"Upon my soul, 'tis true, sir."

Lucius, surprised but ready with excuses, exclaims:

"What a wicked beast was I to disfurnish myself against such a good time, when I might ha' shown myself honourable! how unluckily it happened. . . . . Commend me bountifully to his good lordship; and I hope his honour will conceive the fairest of me, because I have no power to be kind: and tell him this from me, I count it one of my greatest afflictions, say, that I cannot pleasure such an honourable gentleman. Good Servilius, will you befriend me so far as to use mine own words to him?"

Servilius:

"Yes, sir, I shall."

Lucius:

"I'll look you out a good turn, Servilius." [*Exit* Servilius.

and Lucius departs.

The strangers who hear this extraordinary conversation seem shocked at it, but whether sincerely or not is doubtful, as they are not again introduced.

First Stranger:

"In my knowing, Timon has been this lord's father,
And kept his credit with his purse,
Supported his estate; nay, Timon's money
Has paid his men their wages:
. . . . . .
Had his necessity made use of me,
I would have put my wealth into donation,
And the best half should have return'd to him,
So much I love his heart."

The next scene is in the house of Sempronius, perhaps the worst of Timon's ungrateful friends, who is applied to also by a servant of Timon's.

Sempronius:

"Must he needs trouble me in't? Hum! 'bove all others?
He might have tried Lord Lucius, or Lucullus;
And now Ventidius is wealthy too,
Whom he redeem'd from prison; all these
Owe their estates unto him."

Servant:

"My lord,
They have all been touch'd and found base metal,
For they have all denied him."

Sempronius, determined to give nothing, now works himself up into a passion, perhaps partly to get rid of the servant the sooner.

Sempronius:

"How! have they denied him?
Has Ventidius and Lucullus denied him?
And does he send to me? Three? Hum!
It shows but little love or judgment in him:
Must I be his last refuge? His friends, like physicians,
Thrice give him over; must I take the cure upon me?
He has much disgraced me in't; I'm angry at him,
That might have known my place.
. . . . . .
I was the first man
That e'er received gift from him:
And does he think so backwardly of me now,
That I'll requite it last? No:
So it may prove an argument of laughter
To the rest, and I 'mongst lords be thought a fool.
I'd rather than the worth of thrice the sum,
He had sent to me first, but for my mind's sake;
I'd such a courage to do him good. But now return,
And with their faint reply this answer join;
Who bates mine honour shall not know my coin." [*Exit.*

Timon's servant, apparently more honest or intelligent than Servilius, exclaims in disgust:

> "Excellent! Your lordship's a goodly villain.
> . . . . . .
> This was my lord's best hope; now all are fled
> Save only the gods."

The next scene introduces the servants of Timon's many creditors. Even some of these pity Timon and blame their employers. One says to another:

> "Your lord sends now for money."

The other answers:

> "Most true, he does."

And the other proceeds:

> "And he wears jewels now of Timon's gift,
> For which I wait for money."

Another servant, more conscientious than his employer, exclaims:

> "I know my lord hath spent of Timon's wealth,
> And now ingratitude makes it worse than stealth."

Flavius appears muffled in a cloak as if for disguise, and these messengers beset him with their claims on Timon. Flavius indignantly complains of Timon's base treatment, exclaiming:

> "Why then preferr'd you not your sums and bills
> When your false masters eat of my lord's meat?
> Then they could smile and fawn upon his debts,
> And take down the interest into their gluttonous maws.
> . . . . . .
> Let me pass quietly."

He gets away from them but they remain in Timon's hall. The unfortunate prodigal now appears angry, astonished and surrounded by these eager claimants for their bills. He rushes off, and when they are gone, re-enters the hall alone with Flavius; he now bids the latter invite all his friends to another banquet, keeping his real design a secret. Flavius thinks he must be mad, and reminds him of his ruined state, but Timon insists

that Sempronius, Lucius, Lucullus, and others should be invited, exclaiming to the mystified Flavius:

> "Go, I charge thee, invite them all: let in the tide
> Of knaves once more; my cook and I'll provide."

The next scene changes to one of more spirited interest, refreshing after so much ingratitude, meanness, and reckless imprudence. Alcibiades, despite his faults, is yet in some respects a noble character, appearing at great advantage compared to the odious false friends of Timon. He quarrels with the Athenian Senate, whose general he is, and among whom are Timon's ungrateful guests. Alcibiades vainly pleads for a man whose name is not given, but who though deserving well of the state has in one instance infringed the law, and incurred its most extreme penalty. The Senate sternly refused Alcibiades his request, who vainly reminds them of his own personal services to the state. This pleading only makes the Athenian rulers the more angry, and they threaten Alcibiades with banishment, and resolve to execute the man he pleads for immediately. Then Alcibiades indignant, thus exclaims:

> "Banish me!
> Banish your dotage; banish usury."

At this defiance the senators condemn him to death if he remains two days more in Athens; they then depart, and Alcibiades, when alone, utters a brief soliloquy in which a spirit not unlike that of Cromwell seems somewhat indicated. In each case a brave general has control of the army, has "won the soldier's hardy heart," and though obeying men whom both consider ungrateful rulers, they alike resolve to turn against them.

Alcibiades:

> "Now the gods keep you old enough; that you may live
> Only in bone, that none may look on you!
> . . . . . .
> I have kept back their foes,
> While they have told their money and let out
> Their coin upon large interest;
> . . . . . .
> Is this the balsam that the usuring senate

Pours into captains' wounds? Banishment!
It comes not ill; I hate not to be banished;
It is a cause worthy my spleen and fury
That I may strike at Athens. I'll cheer up
My discontented troops, and lay for hearts.
. . . . . .
Soldiers should brook as little wrongs as gods." [*Exit.*

Here Alcibiades reveals his plot against the Athenian Senate; like Scott's Marmion this celebrated Greek general knew how to secure and retain the love of his soldiers.

"They love a captain to obey,
Boisterous as March yet fresh as May
With open hand and brow as free
Lover of wine and minstrelsy
Ever the first to scale a tower
As venturous in a lady's bower
Such buxom chief shall lead his host
From India's fires to Zembla's frost."

Yet this description, applicable enough perhaps to Alcibiades and to Marmion, certainly does not apply to either Cromwell, Napoleon, or Wellington. Religious fanaticism, boundless political ambition and exactness of rule and discipline were in their three cases the apparent chief causes of effort and victory. Alcibiades had evidently little, if any, trouble in drawing his soldiers entirely to his side, but before he again appears in this play the unfortunate Timon has to face his fate. His last pretended feast to ungrateful guests consists in dishes of warm water, which he uncovers before the astonished company, while loading them with wild reproaches.

"Live loathed and long,
Most smiling, smooth, detested parasites,
Courteous destroyers, affable wolves, meek bears,
You fools of fortune, trencher-friends, time's flies."

These words evidently startle the astonished guests who are hastening away as he exclaims:

"What! all in motion? Henceforth be no feast,
Whereat a villain's not a welcome guest.
Burn, house! sink, Athens! henceforth hated be
Of Timon man and all humanity!" [*Exit.*

The guests, though driven out, return again looking for their clothes. One exclaims:

"Did you see my cap?"

Another says:

"I have lost my gown."

Another exclaims:

"He's but a mad lord, and naught but honour sways him. He gave me a jewel th' other day, and now he has beat it out of my hat."

Another says:

"Let's make no stay."

While another agrees that Timon must be mad, and all depart. Timon, after thus expelling his astonished guests with frantic words, is in the next act and scene introduced pronouncing bitter maledictions on Athens and its inhabitants. In this wild, frantic denunciation, expressed in revolting terms, Shakespeare may adhere closer to history, which represents Timon a thorough misanthrope, hardly capable of the many fine qualities he shows at the beginning of this play. In fact, Shakespeare's Timon is a kind, generous, passionate prodigal, full of blessings and benefits at first, and of maledictions and abuse afterwards. His evil wishes are almost too revolting for any one to utter save in a state of partial insanity. He ends this denunciation of his fellow-countrymen, by exclaiming:

"Timon will to the woods; where he shall find
The unkindest beast more kinder than mankind.
The gods confound—hear me, you good gods all—
The Athenians both within and out that wall!
And grant as Timon grows, his hate may grow
To the whole race of mankind, high and low!"

The next scene brings in the good steward Flavius with other servants, whom he, very nearly as poor as they, can no longer pay in full. These fellows, however, show real pity for their luckless master, who, had he retained common-sense, would have found relief to his distracted mind among them. But Timon, like some other passionate, hasty people, has evidently chosen a certain clique of companions whom he thinks alone fit for his friendship, and when they disappoint him, he at once gives up all mankind for lost. The honest

Flavius he has apparently seldom consulted, and to the last seems almost ignorant of the real value of this true friend who, owing to his lower social rank, has been practically little regarded by his foolish, misjudging employer. Flavius with two or three of Timon's servants are assembled together at Timon's house in the next scene, where all evince well-merited pity for their ruined patron. One asks of Flavius:

> "Where's our master?
> Are we undone? cast off? nothing remaining?"

Flavius can only answer:

> "Alack! my fellows, what should I say to you?
> I am as poor as you."

Another servant exclaims:

> "Such a house broke!
> So noble a master fall'n! All gone, and not
> One friend to take his fortune by the arm,
> And go along with him!"

Another in the same spirit says:

> "His familiars to his buried fortunes
> Slink all away.
> And his poor self,
> A dedicated beggar to the air,
> With his disease of all-shunn'd poverty,
> Walks like contempt, alone."

Other servants enter, one of whom says in noble words:

> "Yet do our hearts wear Timon's livery,
> That see I by our faces; we are fellows still,
> Serving alike in sorrow."

Flavius:

> "Good fellows all,
> The latest of my wealth I'll share amongst you.
> Let's shake our heads, and say,
> As 'twere a knell unto our master's fortunes,
> '*We have seen better days.*'"

He distributes some money among them, and they depart, while Flavius alone resolves to seek out his unfortunate master, exclaiming:

> "Poor honest lord! brought low by his own heart,
> Undone by goodness.
> . . . . . .

He's flung in rage from this ingrateful seat
Of monstrous friends;
Nor has he with him to supply his life,
. . . . . .
I'll follow and inquire him out:
I'll ever serve his mind with my best will;
While I have gold I'll be his steward still."

In the next scene Timon is alone in a wood digging for roots, and finds gold; his mind is still full of cursing and bitterness owing to the general ingratitude he has met with. He exclaims bitterly at seeing the gold:

"This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions; bless the accursed;
Make the hoar leprosy adored; place thieves,
And give them title, knee, and approbation.
. . . . . [*March afar off.*
Ha! a drum? Thou'rt quick,
But yet I'll bury thee."

Alcibiades now appears heading troops, and accompanied by two courtesans, Phrynia and Timandra. These two are the only female characters in the play, and some moralists might perhaps wish they had been omitted altogether, as they add little to either its interest or importance. Timon grimly supplies these ladies of pleasure with gold, while bitterly reproaching them all the time, when Alcibiades, after vainly trying to be friends with Timon, whom he had always admired, tells him he is now warring against Athens. A common feeling now animates the vindictive general and the gloomy man-hater, but Timon in his embittered mind only views the other as an instrument of his own private revenge. He therefore wishes Alcibiades success against the Athenians, but only to share a common destruction. His language to the women and theirs to him is painful, coarse, and abusive perhaps only too natural, considering their characters and vicious lives, but in every sense revolting. At first they repel his reproaches with equal vehemence, but when scornfully offered gold they receive it with eager thanks, not caring then what he calls them, but eagerly asking for more and more. Alcibiades, who despite voluptuous habits understands and to some extent appreciates Timon,

vainly tries to soothe or attract him. But the unhappy misanthrope, whose lavish generosity has now yielded to frantic malignity against every one, supplies Alcibiades with gold, while entreating him to show no mercy to Athens nor its inhabitants, and ends by saying:

> "There's gold to pay thy soldiers:
> Make large confusion; and thy fury spent,
> Confounded be thyself! speak not, be gone."

Even Alcibiades, though sufficiently enraged against Athens, is yet evidently disgusted at the savage words of Timon, urging him to spare neither old nor young, but to cause a general massacre, and replies:

> "I'll take the gold thou givest me,
> Not all thy counsel.
> . . . . .
> Farewell, Timon:
> If I thrive well, I'll visit thee again."

But Timon wildly declares he hopes never to see him more, and Alcibiades departs, leaving Timon alone, who, while digging for roots and abusing all men, is next visited by Apemantus. This odious old cynic tries to increase Timon's anger against his false friends and turn it in a new direction by suggesting he should leave the wood, mix again in Athenian society, and become a mean flatterer like his acquaintances. These two strange beings, different in nature, at least in Shakespeare's account, are yet forced by peculiar circumstances into a kind of sympathy against their fellow-men. They have a strange conversation, during which Timon naturally asks the odious misanthrope with great reason:

> "Why shouldst thou hate men?
> They never flatter'd thee: what hast thou given?
> . . . . . .
> Hence! be gone!
> If thou hadst not been born the worst of men,
> Thou hadst been a knave and flatterer."

After a long course of mutual abuse and reproaches, Timon drives off Apemantus, who, knowing that he has found gold, resolves to send others to the spot. He apparently directs two thieves to the place, who, pretending to be soldiers, ask money from him. Timon, still nourish-

ing his almost insane hatred to mankind, gives them gold, exhorting them as he did Alcibiades to injure or despoil Athens, exclaiming wildly:

"The laws, your curb and whip, in their rough power
Have uncheck'd theft. Love not yourselves; away!
Rob one another. There's more gold: cut throats;
All that you meet are thieves. To Athens go,
Break open shops; nothing can you steal
But thieves do lose it."

This strange language rather puzzles the thieves, who probably never heard anything like it before. One exclaims to the other:

"He's almost charmed me from my profession, by persuading me to it."

Yet they resolve to be off to Athens, and depart to appear no more. Flavius now comes, and, beholding his luckless master, exclaims in noble words:

"O you gods!
Is yond despised and ruinous man my lord?
Full of decay and failing? O monument
And wonder of good deeds evilly bestow'd!
. . . . . .
He has caught me in his eyes: I will present
My honest grief unto him; and as my lord,
Still serve him with my life."

Timon after some time recognises him, and the honesty of Flavius he at last believes, but his disordered mind is almost overcome by this new impression. He therefore exclaims:

"Had I a steward
So true, so just, and now so comfortable?
It almost turns my dangerous nature wild."

He then addresses those mysterious yet sympathising, fanciful deities, who in Pagan times were supposed often visible, and who were endowed by general belief with every excellence of mind and body. He exclaims in a repentant spirit of devotion:

"Forgive my general and exceptless rashness,
You perpetual-sober gods! I do proclaim
One honest man, mistake me not, but one;
No more, I pray, and he's a steward.
How fain would I have hated all mankind!
And thou redeem'st thyself: but all, save thee,
I fell with curses."

Timon apparently feels a kind of morose, morbid consolation in hating all men, believing them equally wicked merely because of his own ungrateful treatment by a few selfish Athenian acquaintances. His generous, yet passionate, violent, if not implacable spirit is curiously tested during this scene with Flavius, perhaps the most touching in the whole play. Timon cannot avoid even suspecting Flavius to rather resemble his false friends, when he exclaims:

"Methinks thou art more honest now than wise;
For by oppressing and betraying me,
Thou might'st sooner have got another service:
But tell me true,
Is not thy kindness subtle, covetous,
If not a usuring kindness, and as rich men deal gifts,
Expecting in return twenty for one?"

Then Flavius, faithful from first to last, makes this noble answer, proving indeed how foolish and unobservant Timon had always been in overlooking so true a friend as well as honest servant:

"No, my most worthy master; in whose breast
Doubt and suspect, alas! are placed too late.
. . . . . .
That which I show, heaven knows, is merely love,
Duty and zeal to your unmatched mind,
Care of your food and living; and, believe it,
My most honour'd lord,
For any benefit that points to me,
Either in hope, or present, I'd exchange
For this one wish, that you had power and wealth
To requite me by making rich yourself."

Timon, convinced of his honesty, yet now too embittered or mentally weakened to be rational on the subject, replies in a sort of helpless gratitude:

"Look thee, 'tis so. Thou singly honest man,
Here, take: the gods out of my misery
Have sent thee treasure. Go, live rich and happy;
But thus condition'd: thou shalt build from men;
Hate all, curse all, show charity to none,
. . . . . .
And so farewell and thrive."

Even while rewarding the good Flavius, the miserable Timon yields to those savage passions which

now quite rule him. Flavius, remembering his former better nature, exclaims:

> "O! let me stay
> And comfort you, my master."

But Timon, who indeed may now be thought scarcely responsible for what he says and wishes, can only answer:

> "If thou hatest
> Curses, stay not; fly, whilst thou art bless'd and free:
> Ne'er see thou man, and let me ne'er see thee."

And Flavius then leaves him. Hitherto this excellent man had evidently been little noticed by Timon, except as a mere instrument to carry out his orders. The unworthy influences of class distinction, when carried to unreasoning extent, are remarkably shown in the conduct of these two well-meaning, kindly men towards one another. Flavius understands Timon's nature throughout, yet hardly dares to advise, far less try to influence him, while Timon, when sure of Flavius's truth seems almost bewildered, as if he had come suddenly upon an honest man, hitherto unknown to him. They had thus been alike victimised and nearly ruined by a set of worthless frivolous men, whose real characters Flavius doubtless well knew, but was prevented from disclosing to his deceived master, owing to his trusting them because they belonged to the same social rank as himself. The next and last act reintroduces the two artists, poet and painter, who seem always together, calling at poor Timon's cave, having heard of his concealed gold. They imagine that Timon is only pretending to be poor, and has really plenty of money.

Painter:

"Therefore, 'tis not amiss we tender our loves to him, in this supposed distress of his; it will show honesty in us, and is very likely to load our purposes with what they travel for."

Poet:

"What have you now to present unto him?"

Painter:

"Nothing at this time but my visitation; only I will promise him an excellent piece."

Poet:

"I must serve him so too; tell him of an intent that's coming toward him."

They meet Timon, pretending to deeply sympathise with his ungrateful treatment. But Timon, who, unseen, has previously overheard their talk, loads them with scornful reproaches, yet gives them some gold, and then drives them off. Flavius then appears with two senators from Athens, now endangered by Alcibiades and his army, and seeking Timon's mediation. Flavius tells them it is vain to address Timon, but yet asks his luckless master to see and speak to them. Timon approaches, but does not apparently notice Flavius, while the senators pray Timon to use his influence with Alcibiades to spare their city. A noble opportunity for generous forgiveness is now before Timon, but neither Greek history nor Shakespeare describe him as capable of relenting. Timon scornfully pretends to pity these Athenian messengers, who evidently believe he can do anything with Alcibiades, but, still full of vindictive bitterness, he mocks their hopes which he at first rather encourages, by cynically advising them to end their troubles by suicide. His words on this occasion seem founded somewhat on historical records.[1] He exclaims:

> "I have a tree which grows here in my close,
> . . . . . .
> Tell Athens in the sequence of degree,
> From high to low throughout, that whoso please
> To stop affliction, let him take his haste,
> . . . . . .
> Come hither, and hang himself."

Flavius, knowing his master's desperation, says:

"Trouble him no further; thus you still shall find him."

Timon:

> "Come not to me again; but say to Athens,
> Timon hath made his everlasting mansion,
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood;
> Who, once a day with his embossed froth
> The turbulent surge shall cover; thither come,
> And let my grave-stone be your oracle.
> Lips, let sour words go by and language end;
> . . . . . .
> Sun, hide thy beams! Timon hath done his reign."

He leaves them with these words, and they return to

[1] Lempriere's "Dictionary."

Athens. The concluding scene shows the triumphant Alcibiades before Athens, the senators imploring mercy and evidently in his power. Alcibiades, in many respects noble and magnanimous, not quite unworthy of his great teacher, Socrates, thus declares their doom, identifying himself, as it were, with Timon, by viewing all who ill-used him as his own foes also. When compelled to surrender, Alcibiades thus addresses the helpless senators:

> "Open your uncharged ports:
> Those enemies of Timon's, and mine own,
> Whom you yourselves shall set out for reproof,
> Fall, and no more."

He then pardons all the other Athenians, and the city is yielded to him, when the soldier who had first discovered Timon's death, brings the news of it to Athens, bearing with him some lines which Timon had written, still expressing that implacable hatred to mankind which distinguished his last days. Alcibiades reads:

> "Seek not my name: a plague consume you wicked caitiffs left!
> Here lie I, Timon; who, alive, all living men did hate:
> Pass by and curse thy fill; but pass and stay not here thy gait."

Alcibiades, who well knows Timon's history, exclaims:

> "These well express in thee thy latter spirits: . . . . . Dead
> Is noble Timon; of whose memory
> Hereafter more. Bring me into your city,
> And I will use the olive with my sword;
> Make war breed peace; make peace stint war."

Thus Shakespeare ends this affecting story, in which, though pity is aroused for Timon, his ungrateful treatment forms little excuse for the unrelenting, indiscriminate hatred with which he views all men except Flavius. Timon indeed can hardly be fairly termed a hero, at least, not in a very exalted sense of the word. He is often called noble, but save in lavish generosity, arising partly from longing to be popular, he hardly deserves the name. The strange ingratitude occasionally shown by the ancient Greeks and Romans towards their most illustrious men is, perhaps, the most disgraceful feature in their distinguished and even glorious history. Even Alcibiades himself was

not long popular, and finally was banished from Athens. The treatment also of the virtuous Socrates by the Greeks, and of the generals, Coriolanus and Belisarius, by their Roman fellow-countrymen, are far stronger cases of ingratitude than the treatment of Timon by the Athenians. The murdered Greek philosopher and the banished Roman conquerors were in every sense real patriots, well deserving the thanks and lasting gratitude of their respective nations. Timon was really neither more nor less than a generous spendthrift, driven out of his mind, apparently never a very strong one, by the ingratitude of some frivolous, worthless, acquaintances, among whom he wished to live and enjoy himself.

JULIUS CÆSAR

THE instructive contrast between Greeks and Romans may remind modern readers of the extraordinary position held successively by those wonderful races in the history of civilised mankind. "The Greeks," Macaulay observes, "admired only themselves, the Romans admired only themselves and the Greeks."[1]

These two celebrated nations, despite their vast, permanent supremacy in all relating to the knowledge, power, and elevation of mankind, yet believed in a religion now thought merely fabulous by their civilised descendants. The small exclusive race of the Jews, during all the triumphs of Greek intellect and of Roman power, neither gave nor received much, if any, instruction from either Greeks or Romans.[2] Religious accuracy, its closest study and most profound belief among the Jews, the triumphs of intellect among the Greeks, and of martial glory and legislative wisdom among the Romans, severally distinguished these three most illustrious nations known to the ancient world. The political power of the Romans was represented by a magnificent empire in the time of Julius Cæsar. This wonderful man, the admiration alike of soldiers and of legislators, combined in himself many of the highest human qualities, some of which are rarely united. Succeeding ages have agreed in celebrating and confirming his extraordinary and varied powers. As an illustrious French writer of the nineteenth century observes:

"Cæsar was the most complete man that Rome ever produced, one in whom was shown the most harmonious

[1] Essay on "History."
[2] *Ibid.*

development of all faculties. His mind open to the lessons of life forgot none of the counsels which it gives, and always calm amidst the wildest agitations, was obscured neither by anger nor by passion. Even his victories never dazzled him. He continued master of his soldiers and of himself, and dominating from the summit of his fortune the world as it lay stretched at his feet, he never gave way to the intoxication of pride."[1]

Shakespeare evidently admires him greatly, as in *Richard the III.* young Prince Edward, when shown the Tower of London, and told it was built by Cæsar, refers to Cæsar's celebrated "Commentaries," which Macaulay pronounces not history, but incomparable models for military despatches.[2]

Of all great conquerors in the ancient world Julius Cæsar has perhaps obtained and preserved the chief interest of a civilised posterity. The late emperor, Napoleon III., wrote a life of him, in which that calm, resolute sovereign rather yields to enthusiasm as he says:

"When Providence raises up such men as Cæsar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon, it is to trace out to people the path they ought to follow, to stamp with the seal of their genius a new era, and to accomplish in a few years the labours of many centuries. Happy the peoples who comprehend and follow them."[3]

Shakespeare's noble play begins when Julius Cæsar is about to be declared Emperor of Rome. His triumph and popularity are at their height, yet the two republican leaders, Brutus and Cassius, are more prominent in the play than Cæsar is. The latter's celebrity is more proclaimed by others, his own true greatness he never reveals himself. Cicero is briefly introduced, though none of his brilliant eloquence is described, and the few words he says reveal little of his genius. Brutus has been thought by some the real hero of this play, and he certainly takes a most leading part in it. The play opens in Rome, where many of the populace are rejoicing at

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[1] Duruy's "History of Rome," vol. iii. part i.
[2] Essay on "History."
[3] "Preface to Life of Cæsar."



Cæsar's return home from distant campaigns; a few eloquent democratic leaders, however, try to repress the popular enthusiasm, and to arouse sympathy for Cæsar's fallen rival, Pompey, in language which probably few but Shakespeare could command. One of the leading tribunes, Marullus, thus addresses the exulting Roman mob:

> "Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
> What tributaries follow him to Rome,
> You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!
> Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
> Have you climb'd up to walls and battlements,
> To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:
> And when you saw his chariot but appear,
> Have you not made an universal shout,
> That Tiber trembled underneath her banks,
> To hear the replication of your sounds?
> And do you now put on your best attire?
> . . . . . .
> And do you now strew flowers in his way
> That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
> . . . . . .
> Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
> That needs must light on this ingratitude."

The other tribune, Flavius, in consort with Marullus, exclaims:

> "I'll about,
> And drive away the vulgar from the streets:
> So do you too, where you preceive them thick.
> These growing feathers pluck'd from Cæsar's wing
> Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,
> Who else would soar above the view of men
> And keep us all in servile fearfulness."

The Roman multitude in this play seem impressionable to the last degree, easily swayed in their sympathies by various opposing speeches, and always in extremes. Cæsar himself now enters Rome in public procession, admired by the great majority, but distrusted by a few. A soothsayer, probably knowing something of Roman politics, bids Cæsar beware the Ides of March, but the latter despising him as a dreamer, passes on amid general rejoicing and welcome. The two republicans, Brutus and Cassius, remain aloof, gloomy and suspicious, while revealing to one another their views on their country's politics.

A loud shout of the people applauding Cæsar startles them, and Brutus exclaims:

"I do fear, the people
Choose Cæsar for their king."

Cassius, far more crafty and plotting than the fiery Brutus, artfully replies:

"Ay, do you fear it?
Then must I think you would not have it so."

Brutus:

"I would not, Cassius; yet I love him well."

Cassius then, with the consummate art and enviousness of his nature, tries to rouse Brutus against Cæsar, whom he tries to belittle, or disparage as a nervous, if not a cowardly, man, though one of fortune's favourites. He declares he once saved Cæsar from drowning, and proceeds:

"This man
Is now become a god, and Cassius is
A wretched creature and must bend his body,
If Cæsar carelessly but nod on him.
He had a fever when he was in Spain,
. . . . . .
His coward lips did from their colour fly,
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
Did loose his lustre; I did hear him groan;
Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried, '*Give me some drink, Titinius,*'
As a sick girl. Ye gods! it doth amaze me
A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world
And bear the palm alone."

More shouting is now heard, and Brutus apprehensively exclaims:

"I do believe that these applauses are
For some new honours that are heap'd on Cæsar."

Cassius again works upon his excitable friend, Brutus, stirring him up in every way against Cæsar.

Cassius:

"Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs
. . . . . .
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,

But in ourselves, that we are underlings.
. . . . . .
Now in the name of all the gods at once,
Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed,
That he is grown so great? Age, thou art shamed!
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!
. . . . . .
O! you and I have heard our fathers say,
There was a Brutus once that would have brook'd
The eternal devil to keep his state in Rome
As easily as a king."

Brutus, thus artfully reminded of his great republican relative, becomes more irritated against Cæsar, but still admires him, and while trusting Cassius as his friend, hardly understands his full meaning. He replies:

"That you do love me, I am nothing jealous;
What you would work me to, I have some aim:
How I have thought of this and of these times,
I shall recount hereafter;
. . . .
What you have said
I will consider; what you have to say
I will with patience hear, and find a time
Both meet to hear and answer such high things.
Till then, my noble friend, chew upon this:
Brutus had rather be a villager
Than to repute himself a son of Rome
Under these hard conditions as this time
Is like to lay upon us."

Cassius, perceiving that his words are taking effect on Brutus, replies:

"I am glad that my weak words
Have struck but thus much show of fire from Brutus."

They resolve to ask their friend, Casca, who shares their views, to tell them the news, as he is now returning from the state procession; but before they meet him, Cæsar with his train attended by Mark Antony, his devoted adherent, pass them, and Cæsar, always observant of everything and everybody, warns Mark Antony against Cassius in words which, though little heeded at the time, Antony probably remembered for ever after. Antony does not suspect Cassius, and Cæsar repeats his warning in rather singular language.

Cæsar:

"Let me have men about me that are fat:
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights?
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous."

A man like Cæsar would naturally far prefer men like Mark Antony, loyal, joyous, and convivial, longing for pleasures and rewards, than thoughtful, reasoning statesmen like Cassius. Antony, however, only answers:

"Fear him not, Cæsar; he's not dangerous;
He is a noble Roman and well given."

Cæsar replies with mingled dignity and shrewdness:

"I fear him not:
Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men; he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit
That could be moved to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous.
I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear; for always I am Cæsar.
. . . . . .
Tell me truly what thou think'st of him."

Cæsar and his attendants pass on. Cæsar, superior in nearly all great qualities to both Antony and Cassius, yet infinitely prefers the genial gaiety and merriment of the former to the thoughtful gloom or melancholy of the latter. He can control Antony completely, but Cassius is a man not only beyond the control, but the influence of any one, and firmly devoted to his political opinions. Though Cæsar speaks truly enough about Cassius, there is surely no laying down such general rules as these. History describes conspirators and revolutionists of many kinds, cheerful or gloomy, musical or unmusical, and, of course, those who conceal their real feelings the best, would be the most dangerous. The gloomy, envious discontent, which, according to Cæsar, Cassius cannot conceal, would

expose him to the constant suspicion of all vigilant rulers, whereas a smooth, frank, or humble demeanour has often availed, as well as disguised, the most dangerous revolutionists. Brutus and Cassius then question Casca, who says a crown was actually offered to Cæsar by Antony.

Casca:

"I saw Mark Antony offer him a crown; . . . . . he put it by once: but, for all that, to my thinking, he would fain have had it. Then he offered it to him again; then he put it by again: but, to my thinking, he was very loath to lay his fingers off it. And then he offered it the third time; and still as he refused it, the rabblement shouted and clapped their chopt hands and threw up their sweaty nightcaps, and uttered such a deal of stinking breath because Cæsar refused the crown, that it had almost choked Cæsar, for he swooned and fell down at it."

Brutus:

"'Tis very like: he hath the falling sickness."

Cassius, ever crafty and watchful, rejoins with sarcastic bitterness, referring to Cæsar's power and their weakness:

"No, Cæsar hath it not; but you and I
And honest Casca, we have the falling sickness."

Casca, apparently fond of sneering, though not particularly intelligent, replies:

"I know not what you mean by that; but I am sure Cæsar fell down. If the tag-rag people did not clap him and hiss him, according as he pleased and displeased them, as they used to do the players in the theatre, I am no true man."

Brutus, longing to know what are really Cæsar's thoughts and intentions, asks:

"What said he when he came unto himself?"

Casca, who apparently likes to give sarcastic descriptions of all he sees and hears, replies:

"Marry, before he fell down, when he perceived the common herd was glad he refused the crown, he plucked me ope his doublet and offered them his throat to cut. . . . . And so he fell. When he came to himself again, he said, If he had done or said anything amiss, he desired their worships to think it was his infirmity. Three or four wenches, where I stood, cried, '*Alas, good soul!*' and forgave him with all their hearts; but there's no heed to be taken of them; if Cæsar had stabbed their mothers, they would have done no less."

Cassius asks if Cicero spoke, and Casca replies that he

did so in Greek, which he himself did not apparently understand. Though this account may be Shakespeare's invention, it is not unlikely that the accomplished orator opposing Cæsar, yet knowing his popularity, may have spoke in words understood only by a few present whom he could trust. Casca, always sarcastic or envious, contemptuously adds:

"Those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads; but for mine own part, it was Greek to me. I could tell you more news too; Marullus and Flavius, for pulling scarfs off Cæsar's images, are put to silence. Fare you well. There was more foolery yet, if I could remember it."

He departs, after agreeing to sup with Cassius. Brutus exclaims to Cassius:

"What a blunt fellow is this grown to be!
He was quick mettle when he went to school."

Cassius, evidently a closer observer of character than Brutus, replies:

"So he is now in execution
Of any bold or noble enterprise,
However he puts on this tardy form.
This rudeness is a sauce to his good wit,
Which gives men stomach to digest his words
With better appetite."

Brutus, who, unfortunately for himself, greatly relies on Cassius, answers:

"And so it is.
. . . .
To-morrow, if you please to speak with me,
I will come home to you; or, if you will,
Come home to me, and I will wait for you."

Cassius:

"I will do so; till then, think of the world,"

probably meaning the Roman Empire alone. Brutus departs, and Cassius, when alone, reveals his thoughts or plans, in one of those remarkable soliloquies in which Shakespeare makes his plotters and villains often explain themselves, especially in *Richard the III.* and in *Othello*, where the murderous Prince and the treacherous Iago reveal what they withhold from all others around them.

Cassius:

> "Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see,
> Thy honourable metal may be wrought
> From that it is disposed:
> Cæsar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus;
> . . . . . .
> I will this night,
> In several hands, in at his windows throw,
> As if they came from several citizens,
> Writings all tending to the great opinion
> That Rome holds of his name; wherein obscurely
> Cæsar's ambition shall be glanced at;
> And after this let Cæsar seat him sure;
> For we will shake him, or worse days endure."

This odious design of deceiving his friend, in tempting him to slay a political opponent, Cassius now contemplates. He apparently thinks that if Brutus believed in Cæsar's popularity with the Romans, he would not, at least by violence, oppose their making him Emperor. There is therefore no mutual confidence now between Brutus and Cassius, though their personal friendship and republican principles maintain hitherto their strict alliance. Shakespeare, following tradition at this period, introduces storms of thunder and lightning in Rome. A lion is declared by Casca to Cicero, to have met him in the street, who "glared" at him and "went surly by" while—

> "Men all in fire walk up and down the streets,"

and adds, either through cunning or superstition:

> "When these prodigies
> Do so conjointly meet, let not men say
> '*These are their reasons; they are natural*';
> For I believe they are portentous things
> Unto the climate that they point upon."

Cicero agrees that it is a strangely disposed time, but either distrusts Casca, or takes slight interest in his news, while displaying none of his famous eloquence, and taking little part in this play. Casca again meets Cassius, and they talk over the strange prodigies, real or reported, of the time. Cassius, longing to win over Casca to his own views and designs, exclaims, after alluding to the storms and strange apparitions believed as occurring now in Rome:

"Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man
Most like this dreadful night,
A man no mightier than thyself or me
In personal action, yet prodigious grown,
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are."

Casca, guessing he means Cæsar, says:

"Indeed they say the senators to-morrow
Mean to establish Cæsar as a king;
And he shall wear his crown by sea and land,
In every place, save here in Italy."

Cassius, pretty sure of Casca's agreement with him, fiercely replies:

"I know where I will wear this dagger then:
Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius:
Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong;
Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat:
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,
Never lacks power to dismiss itself."

During this dangerous talk the storm continues, and Cassius quite wins over Casca to join him in opposing Cæsar's expected elevation to supreme power.

Casca:

"Hold my hand:
Be factious for redress of all these griefs,
And I will set this foot of mine as far
As who goes farthest."

Cassius, evidently pleased and more eager than ever, exclaims:

"There's a bargain made.
Now know you, Casca, I have moved already
Some certain of the noblest-minded Romans
To undergo with me an enterprise
Of honourable dangerous consequence;
And I do know, by this they stay for me
In Pompey's porch: for now, this fearful night,
There is no stir or walking in the streets;
And the complexion of the element
In favour's like the work we have in hand,
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible."

Cinna, another conspirator, now joins them, and says to Cassius, who is evidently the moving spirit of the three:

> "O Cassius, if you could
> But win the noble Brutus to our party."

Cassius interrupts, confident that he can do so, saying:

> "Be you content: good Cinna, take this paper,
> And look you lay it in the praetor's chair,
> Where Brutus may but find it; and throw this
> In at his window; set this up with wax
> Upon old Brutus' statue; all this done,
> Repair to Pompey's porch, where you shall find us."

By these mean, wicked artifices Cassius tries to convince Brutus that the Roman people are against Cæsar, whereas, really, they are in a large majority for him. Throughout this play Brutus is practically the victim of Cassius, who is indeed, as Cæsar suspected, an unscrupulous, political fanatic. Brutus is simply a sincere, honest lover of real freedom, and while opposing Cæsar or any one else obtaining supreme power, would certainly not by violence resist the popular desire, no matter how different it might be from his own. Cassius, well knowing Brutus, succeeds in deceiving him altogether, and, after despatching Cinna with his directions, says to Casca:

> "Come, Casca, you and I will yet ere day
> See Brutus at his house! three parts of him
> Is ours already, and the man entire
> Upon the next encounter yields him ours."

Casca, probably representing the views of many young Romans, replies:

> "O! he sits high in all the people's hearts:
> And that which would appear offence in us,
> His countenance, like richest alchemy,
> Will change to virtue and to worthiness."

Cassius, quite agreeing with him, eagerly rejoins:

> "Him and his worth and our great need of him
> You have right well conceited. Let us go,
> For it is after midnight; and ere day,
> We will awake him and be sure of him."

This odious deceit of these conspirators practised on a trustful friend is here clearly revealed, yet Brutus and

Cassius are often named together, as if resembling each other in their views if not in their characters. In reality these men are contrasts, according at least to Shakespeare in this play. Cassius evidently despairs of winning over so fair and straightforward a man as Brutus to his side by any fair argument or honest discussion, and resorts to the meanest artifice to gain his end. The next act and scene present Brutus with his servant boy, Lucius. This youth, apparently faithful to his master, takes little part in the play, and is not described at any length. Shakespeare indeed rarely introduces either boys or girls, and seldom makes them of much interest. Brutus when alone, like Cassius, reveals his mind in one of those noble soliloquies which Shakespeare so often introduces. Brutus abhors the idea of Cæsar or any one becoming sole ruler, being himself a most sincere republican, yet had a monarchy been inevitable he would likely have chosen Cæsar before all other competitors. He exclaims in suppressed excitement, alarmed, anxious, and apprehensive:

" It must be by his death: and for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crown'd:
How that would change his nature, there's the question
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder;
And that craves wary walking. Crown him?—that;—
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,
That at his will he may do danger with.
The abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins
Remorse from power; and to speak truth of Cæsar,
I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof,
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once obtains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend: so Cæsar may;
Then, lest he may, prevent.
. . . . . .
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which ~~hatch'd, would, as~~ his kind, grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell."

Lucius re-enters, bringing Brutus a sealed letter which

he found in his room. Brutus opens it and reads when again alone:

> " '*Brutus, thou sleep'st: awake, and see thyself.*
> *Shall Rome, etc. Speak, strike, redress!*' "

This is apparently not the first of Cassius's artifices, for Brutus exclaims:

> " Such instigations have been often dropp'd
> Where I have took them up.
> 'Shall Rome, etc.' Thus must I piece it out:
> Shall Rome stand under one man's awe? What, Rome?
> My ancestors did from the streets of Rome
> The Tarquin drive, when he was call'd a king."

He again refers to the letter:

> " '*Speak, strike, redress!*' Am I entreated
> To speak and strike? O Rome! I make thee promise;
> If the redress will follow, thou receivest
> Thy full petition at the hand of Brutus!"

A knocking is heard, Brutus sends Lucius to the gate, and reveals clearly though unconsciously how he has been deceived by the crafty, plotting Cassius:

> " Since Cassius first did whet me against Cæsar,
> I have not slept."

His mind is now in that fearful conflict which probably many well-meaning, truthful, and deceived people have experienced, whether in public or in private life, as he proceeds:

> " Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:
> The Genius and the mortal instruments
> Are then in council; and the state of man,
> Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
> The nature of an insurrection."

Brutus and Cassius in their soliloquies are alike completely revealed, and it seems probable that they never would have thoroughly agreed had the unsuspicious, impulsive Brutus known the other's true nature. Cassius, however, thoroughly understands Brutus, and by an artful mixture of persuasion and falsehood makes him the tool of his political designs. The conspirators, now six in

number, are announced by Lucius to be at the door with Cassius, and the youth says, describing them:

> "Their hats are pluck'd about their ears,
> And half their faces buried in their cloaks,"

so that he cannot see who they are. Brutus orders them all to be admitted, and exclaims when alone, full of anxiety, and, unlike Cassius, disliking all plots and plotters:

> "They are the faction. O conspiracy,
> Shamest thou to show thy dangerous brow by night
> When evils are most free? O! then by day
> Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough
> To mask thy monstrous visage? Seek none, conspiracy;
> Hide it in smiles and affability."[1]

The conspirators now enter and confer with Brutus. In choosing allies the great name of Cicero is mentioned. This famous orator now old, is known to oppose Cæsar, having formerly made his great rival Pompey the object of his eloquent praise. Brutus first addresses the conspirators before him, and with the generous enthusiasm of his nature disapproves of Cassius' suggestion that they should all take an oath together.

Brutus:

> "No, not an oath:
> . . . . . .
> What need we any spur but our own cause
> To prick us to redress?
> . . . . .
> And what other oath
> Than honesty to honesty engaged,
> That this shall be, or we will fall for it?
> . . . . . .
> But do not stain
> The even virtue of our enterprise
> Nor the insuppressive mettle of our spirits,
> To think that or our cause or our performance
> Did need an oath; when every drop of blood
> That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,
> Is guilty of a several bastardy,
> If he do break the smallest particle
> Of any promise that hath pass'd from him."

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[1] The same idea Shakespeare expresses in *Macbeth*, where the guilty usurper says to his equally guilty consort:

> "Away and mock the time with fairest show,
> False face must hide what the false heart doth know."
>
> —Act I. Scene vii.

Of all the assembled plotters, Brutus though their nominal chief would seem the least practical, showing a romantic, noble, yet fanciful mind incapable of much concealment or artifice, if not of ordinary prudence. The others without replying to his impassioned words now discuss their future confederates. Cinna, Cassius, Casca, and Metellus recommend Cicero in these words:

Cassius:

"I think he will stand very strong with us."

Casca:

"Let us not leave him out."

Cinna:

"No, by no means."

Metellus:

"His silver hairs
Will purchase us a good opinion:
It shall be said, his judgment ruled our hands;
Our youths and wildness shall no whit appear,
But all be buried in his gravity."

Brutus dissents from all four:

"O! name him not;
. . . .
For he will never follow anything
That other men begin,"

and they agree to leave Cicero out of their list. Cassius then suggests, not unwisely, as the future proved, that Antony, Cæsar's chief adherent, should also be assassinated. He evidently knows Antony better than Antony knew him, when he praised him to Cæsar, despite of the latter's warning.

Cassius:

"We shall find of him
A shrewd contriver; and you know, his means,
If he improve them, may well stretch so far
As to annoy us all; which to prevent,
Let Antony and Cæsar fall together.

Brutus, far more scrupulous and high-minded than any of his present associates, dissents, exclaiming:

"Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,
For Antony is but a limb of Cæsar:
. . . . . .

We all stand up against the spirit of Cæsar;
And in the spirit of men there is no blood:
O! that we then could come by Cæsar's spirit,
And not dismember Cæsar!
. . . . . .
And for Mark Antony, think not of him;
For he can do no more than Cæsar's arm
When Cæsar's head is off."

Cassius, who certainly is a better judge of men than Brutus, again remonstrates, saying:

"Yet I fear him;
For in the engrafted love he bears to Cæsar——"

Brutus interrupts, again telling Cassius to think no more about Antony. Trebonius, one of the conspirators, then exclaims, evidently little knowing the feelings of Mark Antony:

"Let him not die;
For he will live, and laugh at this hereafter."

It is clear enough that except Cassius none of the party really understands Antony, "the coming man," with a vengeance, who was always able to combine great shrewdness, self-control and knowledge of men with naturally high spirits and convivial, joyous habits. The conspirators having decided on the death of Cæsar, then part company, Brutus vainly trying to keep up his own spirits, and thus bids them adieu for the present.

"Good gentlemen, look fresh and merrily;
Let not our looks put on our purposes.
But bear it as our Roman actors do,
With untired spirits and formal constancy."

They leave him, and Brutus, calling to his servant Lucius and finding him asleep, exclaims as envying his innocent ignorance of the crime intended:

"Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It is no matter;
Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber:
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies,
Which busy care draws in the brains of men;
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound."

Portia, his wife, now enters, knows something weighs heavily on her husband's mind, but cannot guess the cause, which he withholds from her. Yet she adjures him to trust her in words of most touching entreaty.

Portia:

"Upon my knees,
I charm you, by my once commended beauty,
By all your vows of love and that great vow
Which did incorporate and make us one,
That you unfold to me, yourself, your half,
Why you are heavy, and what men to-night
Have had resort to you."

Brutus, afraid to tell her, and yet having every confidence in her love for him, exclaims:

"Kneel not, gentle Portia."

And she, catching up his words, eagerly replies:

"I should not need, if you were gentle Brutus.
Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus.
Is it excepted I should know no secrets
That appertain to you?
. . . . . .
I grant I am a woman; but withal
A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter,
Think you I am no stronger than my sex,
Being so father'd and so husbanded?
Tell me your counsels, I will not disclose 'em."

Brutus exclaims, deeply touched by this appeal:

"O ye gods,
Render me worthy of this noble wife!"

and promises he will tell her his secrets later on, but in this play they do not speak to each other again, and another conspirator, Ligarius, now enters, agreeing with Brutus in the design against Cæsar, and they depart together to rejoin the other plotters. In the next scene Cæsar himself appears followed by his wife Calpurnia. This lady, either more timid or imaginative than her illustrious partner, is alarmed at repeated apparitions in Rome, and, apprehensive of Cæsar's danger, exclaims as if she rather ruled the imperial hero:

"What mean you, Cæsar? think you to walk?
You shall not stir out of your house to-day."

Cæsar persists in going out, and she proceeds in terrified entreaty:

"Cæsar, I never stood on ceremonies,
Yet now they fright me,"

and she tells him of the strange unearthly sights and sounds reported from the Roman streets, exclaiming:

"A lioness hath whelped in the streets;
. . . . . .
Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
. . . . . .
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
O Cæsar! these things are beyond all use,
And I do fear them."

Cæsar while trying to reassure her, utters these grand words, worthy of himself indeed, yet apparently due to Shakespeare:

"Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come,"

yet Cæsar as a pagan, believing to some extent in the wisdom of the augurs, asks a servant what they report, and hears that they, like his wife, advise him not to venture into the streets that day. His high spirit, however, makes him disregard all warnings, and Calpurnia again exclaims, with only too much truth:

"Alas, my lord,
Your wisdom is consumed in confidence.
Do not go forth to-day:
. . . . . .
We'll send Mark Antony to the senate-house;
And he shall say you are not well to-day."

Cæsar is about to yield to Calpurnia's entreaty, when, unluckily, Decius Brutus, a conspirator, but quite unsuspected by Cæsar, enters, requesting him earnestly to go with him to the Senate-House. Cæsar at first refuses, telling Decius "for his private satisfaction" that he remains at home to please his wife, who has been terrified by dreams about his danger. Decius, however, evidently a deceitful man, yet trusted by Cæsar, thus ridicules his fears, and after saying that the Senate intend that day to offer a crown to Cæsar, craftily adds:

"It were a mock
Apt to be render'd, for some one to say
'*Break up the senate till another time,*
When Cæsar's wife shall meet with better dreams.'"

Cæsar then yielding to this treacherous man, impatiently exclaims:

> "How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia!
> I am ashamed I did yield to them.
> Give me my robe, for I will go."

Some of Cæsar's foes, Brutus, Cinna, Trebonius, and his adherent Antony now enter, and Cæsar, quite unsuspicious, addresses them all in a few words to each. He says to Brutus:

> "What! Brutus, are you stirr'd so early too?"

and to the gay Antony Cæsar says:

> "See! Antony, that revels long o' nights,
> Is notwithstanding up.
> . . . . . .
> I am to blame to be thus waited for.
> . . . . . .
> Good friends, go in, and taste some wine with me;
> And we, like friends, will straightway go together."

The deceived Brutus remorsefully exclaims to himself:

> "That every like is not the same, O Cæsar!
> The heart of Brutus yearns to think upon."

They all depart for the Senate-House; while a certain sophist named Artemidorus reads a paper in his hands warning Cæsar against his chief enemies by name, which he intends to show Cæsar as the latter passes. In the next short scene Portia, the devoted wife of Brutus, sends Lucius to the Senate-House, to report to her what is passing there. A soothsayer enters and tells her he fears some danger to Cæsar. Portia, who apparently has no personal dislike to the latter, and is not in her husband's secret, though wishing him success in everything, exclaims:

> "O! Brutus,
> The heavens speed thee in thy enterprise!
> . . . . . .
> Brutus hath a suit
> That Cæsar will not grant. O! I grow faint.
> Run, Lucius, and commend me to my lord;
> . . . . . .
> And bring me word what he doth say to thee.

Act III. brings together nearly all the chief men assembled in the Capitol during a meeting of the Senate. Cæsar, who though fearless may not be free from some

superstition, exclaims to a soothsayer, remembering the previous warning:

"The Ides of March are come."

To which the latter ominously replies:

"Ay, Cæsar; but not gone."

Artemidorus, holding his paper of warning against most of the conspirators, vainly tries to get Cæsar to read it, saying it concerns him nearly, but Cæsar replies what touches himself should be last read, and passes on into the Senate-House. The conspirators are now all around him, and Trebonius artfully entices Antony away with him. The plotters then, according to previous agreement, entreat Cæsar to pardon a certain Publius Cimber, sentenced to banishment, whose brother Metellus, one of the conspirators, kneels to Cæsar, who calmly but steadily refuses the request. Brutus and Cassius then each entreat the pardon of Publius, but Cæsar remains inexorable, exclaiming as he sees so many distinguished suppliants before him, though in words which certainly indicate a rather despotic inclination:

"I could be well moved, if I were as you;
If I could pray to move, prayers would move me:
But I am constant as the northern star,
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.
The skies are painted with unnumber'd sparks,
They are all fire and every one doth shine.
But there's but one in all doth hold his place:
So in the world; 'tis furnish'd well with men,
. . . . . .
Yet in the number I do know but one
That unassailable holds on his rank,
Unshaked of motion; and that I am he,
Let me a little show it, even in this;
That I was constant Cimber should be banish'd,
And constant do remain to keep him so."

Such an answer, apparently confirming the fears of the Republicans, was sure to enrage all his foes beyond endurance; they rush upon him and stab him, Casca giving the first and Brutus the last blow, when Cæsar exclaims, both in history and the play:

"Et tu, Brute!"

and falls, dying at the foot of Pompey's statue. Evidently

Cæsar had no idea of danger from any one, least of all from Brutus, whom he had always loved, and who had always loved him. The conspirators then shout in triumph around the dead Cæsar, while Antony alarmed takes refuge for a short time in his house. Brutus now excited to the utmost, trying to convince himself and others that he has done a patriotic duty in slaying a tyrant, exclaims to those around:

> "Stoop, Romans, stoop,
> And let us bathe our hands in Cæsar's blood
> . . . . . .
> And besmear our swords:
> Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,
> And waving our red weapons o'er our heads,
> Let's all cry, '*Peace, freedom and liberty.*'"

Cassius, evidently overjoyed at what has happened, exultingly exclaims:

> "How many ages hence
> Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
> In states unborn and accents yet unknown!"

A messenger from Antony now approaches Brutus, asking a safeguard or assurance of safety, if he comes among the conspirators, to view Cæsar's body. Antony, who hitherto has been only known as the brave, devoted follower of Cæsar, obeying him in everything, and of joyous and gay, if not reckless habits, now develops, as it were, a new character, and for some time displays an amount of self-control and knowledge of his fellow Romans for which none, perhaps not even Cæsar himself, appears to have given him credit. His message to Brutus, whom he knows as well as Cassius does, shows how these two crafty, and thoroughly worldly men, can influence or deceive an impulsive and fanciful, though brave enthusiast. Antony's message delivered by words, says:

> "Say I love Brutus, and I honour him;
> Say I fear'd Cæsar, honour'd him and loved him.
> If Brutus will vouchsafe that Antony
> May safely come to him, and be resolved
> How Cæsar hath deserved to lie in death,
> Mark Antony shall not love Cæsar dead
> So well as Brutus living; but will follow
> The fortunes and affairs of noble Brutus
> Through the hazards of this untrod state."

These artful words deceive Brutus as completely as the forged letters of Cassius had done before. He exclaims in complete confidence to the messenger:

> "Thy master is a wise and valiant Roman,
> I never thought him worse.
> Tell him, so please him come unto this place,
> He shall be satisfied, and, by my honour,
> Depart untouch'd.
> I know that we shall have him well to friend."

Cassius, as before, proves his keener intelligence by rejoining:

> "I wish we may: but yet have I a mind
> That fears him much."

Antony then appears. The sight of his dead patron and chief seems at first to quite overcome him, as he exclaims in mournful words without blaming any one as yet:

> "O mighty Cæsar! dost thou lie so low?
> Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
> Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well."

Then he addresses the conspirators with assumed humility:

> "I know not, gentlemen, what you intend,"

and after praising Cæsar in devoted words, ends by offering himself up as their next and willing victim, probably knowing he is in no danger from them. The generous and credulous Brutus immediately replies, apparently remorseful already to some extent for what he has done:

> "O! Antony beg not your death of us.
> Though now we must appear bloody and cruel,
> . . . . . .
> Our hearts you see not; they are pitiful;
> And pity to the general wrong of Rome—
> . . . . . .
> Hath done this deed on Cæsar.
> . . . . . .
> To you our swords have leaden points, Mark Antony:
> . . . . . .
> Our hearts
> Of brothers' temper, do receive you in,
> With all kind love, good thoughts and reverence."

Cassius, ever an artful practical intriguer, tries to win

over Antony in a thoroughly worldly spirit, but cannot deceive him:

> "Your voice shall be as strong as any man's
> In the disposing of new dignities."

Antony now perceives how they regard him, and, rightly guessing the very slight hold the conspirators have as yet on the Roman people, resolves to praise Cæsar, and yet for a short time feign a wish to be friendly with his foes. He shakes each of the chief conspirators ominously by the hand, a deadly grip indeed, as the future proved, while lamenting Cæsar's death and glorifying him in general terms, ending with:

> "Here didst thou fall, and here thy hunters stand.
> . . . . . .
> O world, thou wast the forest to this hart;
> How like a deer, strucken by many princes,
> Dost thou here lie!"

Cassius interrupts when Antony, with consummate tact, replies:

> "Pardon me, Caius Cassius;
> The enemies of Cæsar shall say this:
> Then in a friend, it is cold modesty."

Cassius, more and more suspicious of Antony, whom he understands better than the other conspirators do, asks with practical sense:

> "I blame you not for praising Cæsar so;
> But what compact mean you to have with us?"

Antony, wishing at present to allay suspicion, answers:

> "Friends am I with you and love you all,
> Upon this hope, that you shall give me reasons
> Why and wherein Cæsar was dangerous."

These words touch Brutus, for whom they were chiefly intended, and he exclaims:

> "Or else were this a savage spectacle:
> Our reasons are so full of good regard
> That were you, Antony, the son of Cæsar,
> You should be satisfied."

Antony at once replies:

> "That's all I seek,"

and then asks leave of Brutus, who at once grants it, to deliver a funeral oration before the assembled Roman mob

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over the remains of Cæsar. Brutus is evidently deceived, though in different ways, by both Antony and Cassius, and the latter warns him aside:

> "You know not what you do: do not consent.
> . . . . . .
> Know you how much the people may be moved
> By that which he will utter?"

Brutus then declares that he himself will first address the people, and is confident he can quite vindicate in their eyes the slaying of Cæsar. Antony consents, having won his point, and all depart except himself. When alone, Antony, in a terrible soliloquy, thereby relieves his agitated mind from the strong constraint he has hitherto imposed upon it. Addressing the prostrate, silent form of his great hero, he exclaims with all the fervid eloquence of indignation and revenge:

> "O! pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
> That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
> Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
> That ever lived in the tide of times.
> Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!
> Over thy wounds now do I prophesy,
> . . . . . .
> Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
> Shall cumber all the parts of Italy;
> And Cæsar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
> . . . . . .
> Shall in these confines, with a monarch's voice
> Cry 'Havoc,' and let slip the dogs of war."

A servant now enters telling Antony that young Octavius Cæsar, nephew of Julius, is approaching Rome, and is within seven leagues of the city. This prince is indeed "the man of the future," in whose glorious reign the vast Roman Empire was destined to attain its highest point of grandeur, power, and prosperity. He is compared by Macaulay to William III. for sagacity even in youth, but in this play he takes only slight part, and does not appear till Act IV.[1]

[1] "The faculties which are necessary for the conduct of important business ripened in him (William III.) at a time of life when they have scarcely begun to blossom in ordinary men. Since Octavius the world had seen no such instance of precocious statesmanship." —"History of England," chap. vii.

Shakespeare follows history in representing Octavius at this time quite under Antony's influence, and, owing to his youth, in a rather subordinate position. Antony foreseeing the future, yet knowing the present time dangerous to Octavius while the Republicans are supreme in Rome, sends the messenger back to Octavius with these words:

> "Post back with speed, and tell him what hath chanced:
> Here is a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome,
> No Rome of safety for Octavius yet."

The next scene introduces Brutus addressing the Roman citizens at the Forum. He is evidently deceived about their real sentiments, owing at least partly to the forged letters sent him by Cassius, and fancies that Cæsar's alleged ambition was an object of general dread, whereas the great Julius was evidently popular with the majority. Yet Shakespeare may perhaps represent the Roman people as more fickle than they really were, or at least more quickly stirred, though, in the main, he adheres to historic facts. At first they are almost won over by the words of Brutus, certainly those of an honest enthusiast, quite misled and placed in a position he never contemplated. He exclaims to the Roman multitude:

> "If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Cæsar's, to him I say, that Brutus' love to Cæsar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Cæsar, this is my answer:—Not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Cæsar were living and die all slaves, than that Cæsar were dead, to live all free men? As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him: but, as he was ambitious, I slew him."

These eloquent words show the real feelings and position of Brutus at this time. He among all the conspirators most loved and admired Cæsar. Though a sincere Republican he wished the Roman people to have complete freedom in their choice of government, and had he fully known Cæsar's vast popularity, would perhaps have never opposed him. This seems likely from Cassius resorting to the odious artifice of sending him forged letters misrepresenting the popular feelings about Cæsar. Under their influence in great measure Brutus had joined the conspirators, and stood therefore in a

different position from any of the others. He concludes his speech, which, though short, is a masterpiece of eloquence:

"I have done no more to Cæsar than you shall do to Brutus. . . . . Here comes his body, mourned by Mark Antony: who though he had no hand in his death, shall receive the benefit of his dying, a place in the commonwealth; as which of you shall not? With this I depart—that, as I slew my best loved for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death."

The people are at first won over by these words, well knowing the honest nature of Brutus, and shout:

"Live, Brutus! live!
Bring him with triumph home unto his house.
Give him a statue with his ancestors."

Brutus then departs, requesting all to give a fair hearing to Antony, who now approaches with followers bearing Cæsar's body, and prepares to deliver an oration. He first says, with consummate tact:

"For Brutus' sake, I am beholding to you."

The citizens, yet under the influence of Brutus' last words, exclaim:

"'Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here.
This Cæsar was a tyrant.
. . . . . .
Nay, that's certain:
We are blest that Rome is rid of him."

Amid these discouraging murmurs, Antony delivers his extraordinary speech. He begins by saying he has come only to bury Cæsar, not to praise him, and having thus calmed his hearers by a meek declaration, he gradually proceeds to extol Cæsar in the most forcible, yet guarded words.

Antony:

"The noble Brutus
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Cæsar answer'd it.
. . . . . .
When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.

You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
. . . . . .
And sure, he is an honourable man."

By this style of speaking, so cautiously expressed, yet so full of meaning, Antony obtains a calm hearing, which he knew would be impossible had he at first fiercely denounced Cæsar's foes. The Romans begin now to hesitate under the spell of Antony's words, and say to each other:

"Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.
. . . . . .
If thou consider rightly of the matter,
Cæsar has had great wrong.
. . . . . .
He would not take the crown;
Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious.
. . . . . .
There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony."

The latter, exercising great self-control with determined purpose, proceeds:

"O masters, if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,
Who, you all know, are honourable men:
. . . . . .
But here's a parchment with the seal of Cæsar;
'Tis his will:
Let but the commons hear this testament—
(Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read—)
And they would go and kiss dead Cæsar's wounds,
. . . . . .
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory."

The citizens, startled at this news and full of curiosity, eagerly ask to hear the will, but Antony, proceeding, as it were, step by step in his cautious, designing speech, still delays:

"It is not meet you know how Cæsar loved you.
. . . . . .
It will inflame you, it will make you mad;
'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs;
For, if you should, O! what would come of it!"

This half-divulged information has its natural effect, as Antony meant. The people again entreat to hear the will, and again Antony delays reading it, saying:

"I have o'ershot myself to tell you of it:
I fear I wrong the honourable men
Whose daggers have stabb'd Cæsar; I do fear it."

The mob, more and more won over to Cæsar, angrily exclaim:

"They were traitors: *honourable men!*
. . . . . .
They were villains, murderers: the will! read the will."

Antony, with feigned reluctance, answers:

"You will compel me, then, to read the will?
. . . . . .
Shall I descend? and will you give me leave?"

At his request the people form a ring around Cæsar's body, Antony stands beside it, and still delays reading till he has won over his hearers yet more by enumerating Cæsar's triumphs, and describing minutely the particulars of his murder. He exclaims:

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now;
. . . . . .
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through;
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
. . . . . .
This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,
Ingratitude more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquish'd him; then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
. . . . . .
Great Cæsar fell.
O! what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.
O! now you weep,
. . . .
Look you here,
. . . .
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors."

The mob, thoroughly aroused, though rather bewildered, shout vehemently:

"O piteous spectacle!
. . . .
O noble Cæsar!
. . . .
O traitors, villains!
. . . .
We will be revenged.
. . . .
Revenge!—Seek!—Burn!—Fire!—Kill!—Slay!—
Let not a traitor live!"

Antony now interposes with assumed calmness:

"Stay, countrymen.
. . . . . .
Let me not stir you up
To such a sudden flood of mutiny.
They that have done this deed are honourable:
What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,
That made them do it: they are wise and honourable,
And will, no doubt, with reasons answer you,
. . . . . .
I am no orator, as Brutus is;
But as you know me all, a plain, blunt man;
That love my friend;
. . . . . .
But were I Brutus,
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue
In every wound of Cæsar's that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny."

The people, mad with excitement at these words, shout:

"We'll burn the house of Brutus.
. . . . . .
Away, then! come, seek the conspirators."

Antony for the last time delays them:

"Why, friends, you go to do you know not what:
Wherein hath Cæsar thus deserved your loves?
. . . . . .
You have forgot the will I told you of."

The mob rejoin:

"Most true: the will! Let's stay and hear the will."

Antony now reading it proceeds:

"To every Roman citizen he gives,
To every several man, seventy-five drachmas."

The citizens gratefully exclaim, though certainly not from unselfish motives:

"Most noble Cæsar! We'll revenge his death."

Antony then declares that Cæsar has also left:

> "All his walks,
> His private arbours and new-planted orchards,
> On this side Tiber; he hath left them you,
> And to your heirs for ever; common pleasures,
> To walk abroad and recreate yourselves.
> Here was a Cæsar! when comes such another?"

These words put the finishing stroke in rousing the popular rage against the conspirators. The people shout in answer:

> "Never, never. Come, away, away!
> We'll burn his body in the holy place,
> And with the brands fire the traitors' houses.
> . . . . . .
> Go fetch fire.
> . . . .
> Pluck down benches.
> . . . . . .
> Pluck down forms, windows, anything."

They rush away, and Antony, as victorious with his tongue as he often was with his sword, exclaims to himself in triumph:

> "Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,
> Take thou what course thou wilt!"

It would appear from this historical scene that Antony thoroughly knew the Roman people, and represented the feeling of the majority at that time. Probably some soldiers of Cæsar and their relatives were among Antony's hearers, while Brutus and Cassius find few advocates, unless indeed their partisans were overawed at the time by the enthusiastic violence of Cæsar's admirers. The contrast between these celebrated orations of Antony and of Brutus displays with wonderful power the different qualities of these great men. Antony is a thorough man of the world, at least of the Roman world, ambitious, crafty, observant and self-controlled to an extraordinary degree. He gradually reveals his own feelings and full powers of mind during his long, and wonderful speech. He feels his way with his audience as he proceeds, slowly yet surely gaining ground with his hearers, first exciting their compassion, then arousing their national pride, and

lastly appealing powerfully to their private interests and pleasures. On the other hand, Brutus, living in a dream comparatively as to the feelings of his countrymen, makes a much shorter speech. He is earnest, eloquent, fearless, and impassioned, yet only understood properly by a few personal friends, or political sympathisers. In this respect he may resemble some other revolutionists in both ancient and modern times, who, being themselves fanciful, dreamy, or unpractical, are easily misled by more cunning, worldly partisans, and quite misunderstood by their immediate followers. Brutus therefore fancies he represents the views of the Roman people, and believes he is their deliverer from an approaching tyranny. During the confusion in Rome after these exciting speeches, a Roman poet named Cinna is mistaken by the angry ignorant mob for his namesake, one of the conspirators, and fiercely attacked. He vainly exclaims:

> "I am Cinna the poet, ...
> I am not Cinna the conspirator."

The furious rabble, however, worked up by Antony's words to a pitch of indiscriminate ferocity, slay him, and threaten all the conspirators, who, for the most part, effect their immediate escape from Rome to Greece, where they collect their followers about them and prepare to resist Antony. The next act and scene introduces the Triumvirs, Antony, young Octavius Cæsar, and Lepidus in council at Antony's Roman residence, with the names of the fled conspirators before them. Antony first thus reveals their future vindictive policy:

> "These many, then, shall die; their names are prick'd."

Lepidus, certainly the dullest of the three, and no match for either, is requested by Antony to withdraw and bring him Cæsar's will, and he departs, leaving his colleagues together, when Antony, as crafty as valiant, reveals his contempt for him to Octavius, saying:

> "This is a slight unmeritable man,
> Meet to be sent on errands: is it fit,
> The three-fold world divided, he should stand
> One of the three to share it?"

Young Octavius, always calm, replies, apparently with slight sarcasm:

> "So you thought him,
> And took his voice who should be prick'd to die,
> In our black sentence and proscription."

Antony, apparently rather irritated at this cool reply from his young colleague, retorts:

> "Octavius, I have seen more days than you:
> And though we lay these honours on this man,
> To ease ourselves of divers slanderous loads,
> He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold,
> . . . . . .
> Either led or driven, as we point the way;
> . . . . . .
> Then take we down his load and turn him off,
> Like to the empty ass to shake his ears,
> And graze in commons."

Octavius, with the calm, discriminating wisdom which always distinguished him, answers cautiously:

> "You may do your will;
> But he's a tried and valiant soldier."

Octavius at present cannot oppose Antony, who is now heading the Roman army, but he thus warns him, as if he were the elder instead of the younger of the two, not to underrate a brave colleague, when Antony hotly replies:

> "So is my horse, Octavius; and for that
> I do appoint him store of provender:
> It is a creature that I teach to fight,
> To wind, to stop, to run directly on,
> His corporal motion govern'd by my spirit.
> And, in some taste, is Lepidus but so;
> He must be taught, and train'd and bid go forth;
> A barren-spirited fellow;
> . . . . .
> Do not talk of him
> But as a property. And now, Octavius,
> Listen great things: Brutus and Cassius
> Are levying powers: we must straight make head:
> Therefore let our alliance be combined,
> Our best friends made, our best means stretch'd."

Octavius, though so young a man, with the cautious apprehension of an old one, replies:

> "Let us do so; for we are at the stake,
> And bay'd about with many enemies;
> And some that smile have in their hearts, I fear,
> Millions of mischiefs."

The next scene is at the camp of Brutus, near Sardis, where he awaits a junction with Cassius. The conspirators seem on the losing side, and Brutus, whose life is now a succession of disappointments, begins to doubt the friendship even of Cassius. Brutus asks his friend Lucilius, who was not among the actual conspirators, how Cassius had received him:

Lucilius:

> "With courtesy and with respect enough;
> But not with such familiar instances,
> Nor with such free and friendly conference,
> As he hath used of old."

Brutus, whose open nature might scarcely have allowed much love for the artful Cassius had it not been for political sympathies, together with their common friends and common foes, replies:

> "Thou hast described
> A hot friend cooling: ever note, Lucilius,
> When love begins to sicken and decay,
> It useth an enforced ceremony.
> There are no tricks in plain and simple faith."

Cassius soon joins him, and these two once popular leaders have a remarkable private conference together. Brutus, always strict and scrupulous, had condemned a certain Pella for being bribed by the people of Sardis, while Cassius had written to Brutus in his behalf. Brutus therefore says:

> "You wrong'd yourself to write in such a case."

Cassius, less particular and more tricky, replies:

> "In such a time as this it is not meet
> That every nice offence should bear his comment."

Then comes a quarrel between the two leaders, which is only a short one, as now beset by the same enemies, they are forced to make the best of each other.

Brutus:

> "Let me tell you, Cassius, you yourself
> Are much condemn'd to have an itching palm;
> To sell and mart your offices for gold
> To undeservers."

Cassius indignantly denies the charge, and Brutus, almost at his wits' end between mortal foes and mean or suspected allies, indignantly exclaims:

"What, shall one of us,
That struck the foremost man of all this world
But for supporting robbers, shall we now
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,
And sell the mighty space of our large honours
For so much trash as may be grasped thus?
I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,
Than such a Roman."

Cassius vehemently resents these words, and the quarrel increases, till Cassius exclaims:

"When Cæsar lived, he durst not thus have moved me."

Brutus, as if stung at recollection of his noble victim, retorts:

"Peace, peace! you durst not so have tempted him.
. . . . . .
I did send
To you for gold to pay my legions,
Which you denied me: was that done like Cassius?
Should I have answer'd Caius Cassius so?
When Marcus Brutus grows so covetous,
To lock such rascal counters from his friends,
Be ready, gods, with all your thunderbolts,
Dash him to pieces!"

Cassius:

"I denied you not: . . . . . he was but a fool
That brought my answer back."

Still Brutus is offended, till Cassius invokes his compassion by reminding him of their common danger, and of their implacable enemies. He exclaims, as if prepared for instant death, in words intended to affect the generous, impulsive Brutus:

"Come Antony, and young Octavius, come.
Revenge yourselves alone on Cassius,
For Cassius is aweary of the world;
Hated by one he loves; braved by his brother;
Check'd like a bondman; all his faults observed,
Set in a note-book, learn'd, and conn'd by rote,
To cast into my teeth. O! I could weep
My spirit from mine eyes! There is my dagger,
And here my naked breast; within, a heart
Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold:
If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth;

I that denied thee gold, will give my heart :
Strike, as thou didst at Cæsar ; for I know,
When thou didst hate him worst, thou lovedst him better
Than ever thou lovedst Cassius."

This appeal at once succeeds with Brutus, as Cassius probably expected, well knowing his impressionable nature. Cassius immediately regains his former influence over Brutus, who, completely melted at the other's real or assumed distress, exclaims :

"Sheathe your dagger :
Be angry when you will, it shall have scope ;
Do what you will, dishonour shall be humour.
O Cassius ! you are yoked with a lamb
That carries anger as the flint bears fire,
Who, much enforced, shows a hasty spark
And straight is cold again."

Thus Brutus, fanciful, credulous, and high-minded, yields completely to the words of Cassius, and thoroughly trusts and confides in him again. The latter, after more professions of friendship, exclaims, in language well calculated to soften Brutus :

"Have you not love enough to bear with me,
When that rash humour which my mother gave me
Makes me forgetful ?"

Brutus, quite won over by this language, mildly replies :

"Yes, Cassius, and from henceforth,
When you are over-earnest with your Brutus,
He'll think your mother chides, and leave you so."

This strange reconciliation is rather suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a poet, evidently an eager Republican, followed by Lucilius and Titinius, who, though friends of Brutus and Cassius, say nothing, while the poet reproaches both leaders for quarrelling, saying :

"For shame, you generals ! what do you mean ?
Love, and be friends, as two such men should be."

Brutus impatiently drives him out, while Cassius, more calm or politic, would fain hear him. Cassius exclaims :

"I did not think you could have been so angry,"

and then Brutus answers :

"O Cassius ! I am sick of many griefs."

Cassius:

"Of your philosophy you make no use,
If you give place to accidental evils."

Then Brutus replies that his wife Portia is dead, when Cassius, expressing sympathy, exclaims:

"How 'scaped I killing when I cross'd you so?
. . . . . .
Upon what sickness?"

Brutus:

"Impatient of my absence,
And grief that young Octavius with Mark Antony
Have made themselves so strong: for with her death
That tidings came."

Cassius continues to utter words of sympathy, when Brutus cuts him short:

"No more, I pray you."

Their friends Titinius and Messala then announce that Antony and Octavius with united forces are approaching Philippi; also that they have already executed many Roman senators, and the great Cicero among them, about whom, however, no further allusion is made, as Shakespeare throughout this whole play says surprisingly little about a man so well worthy of his masterly power of description. Messala then confirms the news of Portia's death, and Brutus exclaims:

"Why, farewell, Portia.
With meditating that she must die once
I have the patience to endure it now."

Cassius, who either has, or pretends to have, less fortitude, says:

"I have as much as this in art as you,
But yet my nature could not bear it so."

Brutus, striving to forget his grief in preparing for battle, rejoins:

"Well, to our work alive,"

and then consults with Cassius about how best to meet their approaching foes. They then part for the night, and Brutus, after speaking to some other friends, bids two of

them, Varro and Claudius, lie down in his tent and sleep, while, having found a book, he asks his young servant Lucius to play and sing, saying with his usual kindness:

"I trouble thee too much, but thou art willing."

The youth plays and sings it is not said what music, but Brutus, overcome by public fears and private grief, exclaims:

"This is a sleepy tune. O murderous slumber!
Lay'st thou thy leaden mace upon my boy,
That plays thee music?"

Lucius evidently falls asleep, and Brutus continues:

"I will not do thee so much wrong to wake thee:
If thou dost nod, thou break'st thy instrument;
I'll take it from thee; and, good boy, good-night."

Brutus, always a man of mild, even gentle nature when not roused to fury by political excitement, then looks at his book, but never says what it is.

"Let me see, is not the leaf turn'd down
Where I left reading? Here it is, I think."

He then exclaims:

"How ill this taper burns!"

and imagines by its dim, uncertain light, that he sees a ghost appear before him. This apparition is meant for the ghost of Cæsar, but Brutus does not apparently recognise him as he exclaims:

"Art thou anything?
Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,
That makes my blood cold and my hair to stare?
Speak to me what thou art."

The ghost replies:

"Thy evil spirit, Brutus."

Brutus, who unlike the guilty princes, Macbeth and Richard III., shows no sign of fear, asks the apparition why it came, and it replies:

"To tell thee thou shalt see me at Philippi."

Brutus calmly rejoins:

"Well; then I shall see thee again?"

The ghost repeats:

"Ay, at Philippi."

And Brutus, with equal firmness, rejoins:

"Why, I will see thee at Philippi, then,"

and the ghost vanishes. Evidently no feeling of moral guilt oppresses Brutus during this scene. The grand lines of Milton in *Comus* apply rather to Brutus when surprised, yet not frightened, before what he thinks is the ghost of Cæsar:

"These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience."

He is troubled and perplexed indeed, knowing that the lives of all who are dear to him are now endangered to the last degree, but no terror or remorse affects him, as he exclaims:

"Now I have taken heart thou vanishest:
Ill spirit, I would hold more talk with thee."

He calls his attendants, asking if they saw anything, but they did not. Brutus, without revealing anything, resolves to keep his vision a secret, and sends a message to Cassius to—

"Set on his powers betimes before,
And we will follow."

He thus allied with Cassius, means to offer the most desperate resistance to the advancing forces of Octavius and Mark Antony. The fifth and last act is indeed a terrible one, full of battles, savage triumphs, and suicides. Its first scene presents Antony and Octavius together heading their allied forces in the plains of Philippi. Their rather stupid, though perhaps prudent colleague Lepidus does not again appear in this play, but he presents himself in its historical successor *Antony and Cleopatra*. He is apparently kept out of the way at present, while his more astute fellow-triumvirs intend to share all power between them. They now hear of the immediate approach of the Republican forces under Brutus and Cassius, and in a few words Octavius and Antony reveal some of their different qualities, Antony, hot-tempered, fiery and energetic, more like a youth, while Octavius, though so

much his junior, shows always the calmness and self-command usually, but not in his rare case, the result of experience.

Antony:

"Octavius, lead your battle softly on,
Upon the left hand of the even field."

Octavius:

"Upon the right hand I; keep thou the left."

Antony impatiently retorts:

"Why do you cross me in this exigent?"

His cool young colleague replies:

"I do not cross you; but I will do so."

Brutus and Cassius now appear and have a parley with the two triumvirs. These mortal foes are brought face to face for the last time. They can all four be well described in Shakespeare's famous words on opposing Englishmen in *Richard the II.*:

"High-stomached are they both and full of ire,
In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire."

Yet with their "ire," these philosophic eloquent Romans, in reality, combine a keen sarcasm and knowledge of character, rarely perceptible in the histories of other nations. This short, fiery interview of these martial and enraged chiefs displays in a brief conference their differing characters with peculiar exactness. The bitterness of their mutual reproaches and personal allusions illustrates their relative peculiarities more completely, or at least in a more interesting manner, than a lengthened description could do. Brutus calmly commences this fierce conference between martial foes, evidently bent upon each other's destruction

"Words before blows: is it so, countrymen?"

Octavius answers, with sarcastic calmness, though with suppressed fury:

"Not that we love words better, as you do."

Brutus:

"Good words are better than bad strokes, Octavius."

The fiery Antony disdains to preserve the same calmness, and exclaims in full recollection of the slain Cæsar:

"In your bad strokes, Brutus, you give good words:
Witness the hole you made in Cæsar's heart,
Crying, '*Long live! hail Cæsar!*'"

The sneering Cassius retorts:

"Antony,
The posture of your blows are yet unknown;
But for your words, they rob the Hybla bees,
And leave them honeyless."

This grim allusion to Antony's artful and wonderful speech makes the latter haughtily answer:

"Not stingless too."

Brutus fearlessly rejoins:

"O! yes, and soundless too;
For you have stol'n their buzzing, Antony,
And very wisely threat before you sting."

Antony, now stirred to fury, exclaims:

"Villains, you did not so, when your vile daggers
Hack'd one another in the sides of Cæsar:
You show'd your teeth like apes, and fawn'd like hounds,
And bow'd like bondmen, kissing Cæsar's feet;
Whilst damned Casca, like a cur, behind
Struck Cæsar on the neck. O you flatterers!"

This word enrages Cassius more than any other, who aptly reminds Brutus that had he taken his advice, Antony would have died with Cæsar.

Cassius:

"Flatterers! Now, Brutus, thank yourself:
This tongue had not offended so to-day,
If Cassius might have ruled."

Octavius, apparently more practical than these orators, impatiently interrupts:

"Come, come, the cause: if arguing makes us sweat,
The proof of it will turn to redder drops.
Look;
I draw a sword against conspirators;
When think you that the sword goes up again?
Never, till Cæsar's three and thirty wounds
Be well avenged, or till another Cæsar
Have added slaughter to the sword of traitors.

Brutus exclaims:

> "Cæsar, thou canst not die by traitors' hands,
> Unless thou bring'st them with thee."

Octavius in answer seems to foresee his own glorious future, as he does again in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and exclaims:

> "I was not born to die on Brutus' sword."

The calm pride of this reply, apparently provokes Brutus into exclaiming:

> "O! if thou wert the noblest of thy strain,
> Young man, thou couldst not die more honourable."

Cassius, falling back on sarcasm, thus taunts his two foes:

> "A peevish schoolboy, worthless of such honour,
> Join'd with a masker and a reveller!"

Cassius apparently knows that many young men have a peculiar aversion to be called boys, and thus hopes to irritate Octavius by the comparison. But this resolute young man is evidently beyond the comprehension of both friends and foes at this time; and the taunts of Brutus and of Cassius, as well as the opinions of his ally Antony, have little weight with him.

While calmly observing all around him, Octavius remains firm and self-controlled as if he knew the world and its ways already, and was biding his time in patience. Antony, perhaps truly called a masker and a reveller, considering that Cæsar himself had given him much the same character, in reply to the taunt of Cassius scornfully retorts:

> "Old Cassius still!"

as if he well knew and despised his character or style of speaking. The "peevish schoolboy" caring less for sharp words than any of them, anxious for the coming strife, and perhaps fully confident of its result, now breaks up this fierce conference between mortal enemies, all of whom it strikingly displays in their true natures. He exclaims to his older colleague:

> "Come, Antony, away!
> Defiance, traitors, hurl we in your teeth:

If you dare fight to-day, come to the field;
If not, when you have stomachs."

The angry foes then separate, when Cassius, knowing that nothing but fatal battle is before them, now excitedly exclaims:

"Why now, blow wind, swell billow and swell bark!
The storm is up, and all is on the hazard."

He then calls his friend Messala, and to him imparts his singular fears of the coming battle, in words which show that this thoughtful Republican, despite his courage and genius, fully shares in the superstitions of his age and country:

"Be thou my witness that against my will,
. . . . . .
Am I compell'd to set
Upon one battle all our liberties.
You know that I held Epicurus strong
And his opinion; now I change my mind,
And partly credit things that do presage."

He then says that two eagles, emblems of victory, which lately were fed by his soldiers, and were evidently birds of good omen—have now vanished, and been replaced by ravens, crows, and kites, which fatal birds—

"Fly o'er our heads and downward look on us,
As we were sickly prey: their shadows seem
A canopy most fatal, under which
Our army lies, ready to give up the ghost."

Messala, wishing to cheer him, replies:

"Believe not so."

Cassius rejoins, as if vainly trying to regain courage:

"I but believe it partly;
For I am fresh of spirit, and resolved
To meet all perils very constantly."

He then has a last consultation with Brutus, exclaiming:

"Now, most noble Brutus,
The gods to-day stand friendly, that we may,
Lovers in peace, lead on our days to age!
Let's reason with the worst that may befall.
If we do lose this battle, then is this
The very last time we shall speak together;
What are you then determined to do?"

Brutus replies, deprecating at first the idea of suicide:

> "I do find it cowardly and vile,
> For fear of what might fall, so to prevent
> The time of life."

Cassius retorts as if in scorn:

> "Then, if we lose this battle,
> You are contented to be led in triumph
> Through the streets of Rome?"

This odious practice of insulting captives by exposing them to the rude taunts of a street mob, often disgraced, strange to say, the triumphs even of the noblest Romans. Throughout their eventful and, in many ways, glorious history, this hateful practice had an apparent fascination for the conquerors, and was more dreaded by some of the vanquished than death itself. Irritated or aroused at its mention, as likely Cassius wished and expected, Brutus exclaims:

> "No, Cassius, no; think not, thou noble Roman,
> That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome;
> He bears too great a mind. But this same day
> Must end that work the Ides of March begun;
> And whether we shall meet again I know not.
> Therefore our everlasting farewell take;
> For ever and for ever, farewell Cassius!
> If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;
> If not, why then, this parting was well made."

Cassius replies:

> "For ever, and for ever, farewell, Brutus."

Throughout this affecting parting Brutus evidently has no idea, and apparently never had, how grossly Cassius had deceived him by sending him forged letters, and Cassius never reveals what he did, though it mainly contributed to the murder of Cæsar, and this subsequent Roman civil war; Brutus and Cassius, however, are now so completely combined, committed to the same course, and beset by the same mortal foes, that they are like one man, and must either triumph or perish together. They evidently anticipate defeat rather than victory, and had alike certainly mistook Roman feeling when they slew Julius Cæsar. They seem never to have contemplated the

terrible, destructive result of this civil war, and to be thus opposed by a majority of their own fellow-countrymen, headed by Cæsar's adherents and relatives. By the assassination of a noble ruler, as friends and foes alike called Cæsar, despite his alleged ambition, these misled, rash conspirators had now exposed their country to the fierce triumph of his dangerous adherent, Mark Antony. This valiant, yet most crafty general, amid his voluptuous gaiety, had evidently encouraged Cæsar's ambition or love of power, by offering him the crown, and seconding him in everything, yet he was altogether inferior to Cæsar in all the best qualities of a ruler. Thus these unfortunate Republican leaders now find themselves threatened with a worse military despotism, under the vindictive Antony, than they ever apprehended under the high-minded Cæsar, and almost despair of victory before the coming battle has decided their fate. The fatal encounter now begins, in which at first Brutus seemed gaining some advantage over Octavius; but this was likely a feint, as Antony soon surrounds his foes. Cassius slays a man he thinks a deserter, but his faithful friend Titinius tells him:

> "O Cassius! Brutus gave the word too early;
> Who, having some advantage on Octavius,
> Took it too eagerly; his soldiers fell to spoil,
> Whilst we by Antony are all enclosed."

Cassius, watching the strife from an eminence, tells Titinius to return to the battle, hearing that Antony has attacked his tents. He tells his attendant Pindarus, to look again towards the scene of battle, and report what he sees, exclaiming:

> "My sight was ever thick; . . . . . Sirrah, what news?"

Pindarus:

> "Titinius is enclosed round about
> With horsemen, that make to him on the spur;
> Yet he spurs on. Now they are almost on him.
> Now Titinius! Now some 'light: O! he 'lights too:
> He's ta'en! And hark! they shout for joy."

Cassius, hearing of his friend's capture, gives up all for lost and resolves on suicide, the Roman's frequent resort

in defeat. He foresees indeed that only death preceded by insult if not torture awaits him, and thus appeals to his faithful servant, Pindarus.

Cassius:

"Come down, behold no more.
O! coward that I am, to live so long,
To see my best friend ta'en before my face!
. . . . . .
In Parthia did I take thee prisoner;
And then I swore thee, saving of my life,
That whatsoever I did bid thee do,
Thou shouldst attempt it. Come now, keep thine oath;
Now be a freeman: and with this good sword,
Search this bosom.
Stand not to answer: here, take thou the hilts;
And when my face is cover'd, as 'tis now,
Guide thou the sword."

Pindarus obeys the fatal direction, and stabs Cassius, who, dying, exclaims:

"Cæsar, thou art revenged,
Even with the sword that kill'd thee."

Pindarus:

"So, I am free; yet would not so have been,
Durst I have done my will. O Cassius!
Far from this country Pindarus shall run,
Where never Roman shall take note of him." [*Exit.*

Pindarus, however, whether wilfully or by mistake, had wrongly reported to Cassius. Titinius was really gaining some advantage, and exclaims when seeing the dead Cassius:

"O setting sun,
As in thy red rays thou dost sink to-night,
So in his red blood Cassius' day is set;
The sun of Rome is set! Our day is gone;
Clouds, dews, and dangers come; our deeds are done!
Mistrust of my success hath done this deed.
. . . . . .
Why didst thou send me forth, brave Cassius?
Did I not meet thy friends? and did not they
Put on my brows this wreath of victory,
And bid me give it thee? Didst not thou hear their shouts?
Alas, thou hast misconstrued everything!"

The brief success of Titinius was apparently trifling,

for like Cassius he gives up all for lost, while exclaiming, addressing the body of Cassius:

> "Take this garland on thy brow;
> Thy Brutus bid me give it thee, and I
> Will do his bidding. Brutus, come apace,
> And see how I regarded Caius Cassius.
> By your leave, gods; this is a Roman's part:
> Come, Cassius' sword, and find Titinius' heart."

So perishes this faithful friend, resolved not to survive Cassius, yet had he expected victory for the cause of Cassius, he might hardly have destroyed himself before the final result of the battle. Antony probably commanded the most formidable part of the divided Roman forces, and was apparently victorious throughout. The suicides of one Republican leader after another end this exciting play, and seem according to historic fact. The dread of cruel insults, if not torture, preceding execution, evidently induced many of the bravest Romans to destroy themselves, rather than become prisoners of war. Brutus now appears viewing the body of his zealous yet rather unscrupulous partisan. The deceit of Cassius in the matter of the forged letters is not named, and it seems likely that Brutus was never enlightened about them.

To the last this heroic enthusiast believed he had been entreated by a Roman majority to assassinate Cæsar, whereas only a minority in Rome would seem to have approved of his doing so. The successful deceit of Cassius had finally caused his own ruin and that of Brutus, but the latter, having apparently no suspicion of it, now mourns over his artful colleague, as if he had always been his truest friend, and, alluding to both Cassius and Titinius, exclaims, in mingled superstition and sorrow:

> "O Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet!
> Thy spirit walks abroad.
> . . . . . .
> Are yet two Romans living such as these?
> The last of all the Romans, fare thee well!
> Friends, I owe more tears
> To this dead man than you shall see me pay.

I shall find time, Cassius, I shall find time.
. . . . . .
Let us to the field. Set our battles on:
. . . . . .
And, Romans, yet ere night
We shall try fortune in a second fight."

This last struggle ends in the total defeat of Brutus, and he escapes with a few followers to a retired spot, but only to commit deliberate suicide. He has indeed nothing to live for now, most of his friends slain, his political cause ruined, and he himself in danger of capture, insult, torture and execution. He therefore resolutely addresses his last adherents:

"Come, poor remains of friends, rest on this rock.
. . . . . .
Sit thee down, Clitus: slaying is the word;
It is a deed in fashion. Hark thee, Clitus."

He evidently begs Clitus in a whisper to slay him, but the latter, a faithful servant even at this desperate moment, shrinks from the idea, and Brutus, fanciful and imaginative, though fearless to the last, addresses severally two other adherents, Dardanius and Volumnius, to the same effect. They all behold and pity their unfortunate leader, and Dardanius says:

"Look, he meditates."

Clitus:

"Now is that noble vessel full of grief,
That it runs over even at his eyes."

It is evident that weeping, thought a proof of weakness or cowardice by many brave men, was not thought so among the most heroic Romans. Brutus still haunted, or bewildered, yet never terrified by the recollection of Cæsar's ghost, exclaims:

"Volumnius:
The ghost of Cæsar hath appear'd to me
Two several times by night;
. . . . .
I know my hour is come.
. . . . .
Good Volumnius,
Thou know'st that we two went to school together:
Even for that our love of old, I prithee,
Hold thou my sword-hilts, whilst I run on it."

Volumnius refuses, while the shouts of the approaching victorious troops become louder. His attendants vainly urge him to fly for his life, but Brutus, to whom his country is the whole world, has no wish to survive all that is lost. Like Cassius, and in later years Cleopatra, he foresees that capture will inevitably cause his public disgrace, as a captive exposed to the insults of a Roman mob. Brutus, imaginative and kindly to the last, perhaps the most civilised and modern in his feelings of all existing Romans, except Octavius, now exclaims to his few friends:

"Countrymen,
My heart doth joy that yet in all my life
I found no man but he was true to me."

This fond idea shows how little he knew of Cassius. In the same deluded spirit he continues, as if in a dream, still fancying that he and his political views were popular at Rome, instead of the reverse:

"I shall have glory by this losing day,
More than Octavius and Mark Antony
By this vile conquest shall attain unto.
So fare you well at once; for Brutus' tongue
Hath almost ended his life's history:
Night hangs upon mine eyes; my bones would rest,
That have but labour'd to attain this hour."

The shouts of the coming army become louder as the victors approach. His attendants again urge Brutus to escape, and all leave him except his servant Strato, to whom he makes the last appeal:

"I prithee, Strato, stay thee by thy lord:
. . . . . .
Hold then my sword, and turn away thy face,
While I do run upon it.
. . . . . .
Farewell, good Strato."

Then recollection of his illustrious victim again overcomes his ardent mind, and he exclaims with his last breath, while falling on his sword:

"Cæsar, now be still:
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will."

He dies, and Antony with Octavius now appear, and

the latter exclaims with the calm magnanimity which distinguished his future life, though now he acts as second to Antony:

"All that served Brutus, I will entertain them."

While Antony himself, beholding the dead Brutus, exclaims with a generosity of feeling which he sometimes, though by no means always, displayed:

"This was the noblest Roman of them all:
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar;
He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them."

This praise though well deserved, comes rather strangely from Antony who had said of Brutus stabbing Cæsar:

"This was the most unkindest cut of all,"

and had charged Brutus especially with,

"Ingratitude more strong than traitors' arms."

But probably complete triumph, if it did not soften Antony's heart, yet put him in a sufficiently forgiving mood to do justice to a fallen foe no longer dangerous.

Thus ends this eventful play, Octavius and Antony being still associated in authority with "the ass" Lepidus and this strange Triumvirate reign in Rome with supreme power; which was fated, however, not to be of long duration. Its disruption, as stated in recorded history, is nobly described in the following magnificent play.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

THIS play, with *Julius Cæsar*, presents a somewhat connected sketch of Roman history, and it may be regretted that Shakespeare did not continue it by recording the subsequent sole reign of Octavius, when known as the Emperor Augustus. The joint triumph of Octavius and Antony was followed by the invasion, or entrance of the latter into Egypt, whose celebrated Queen Cleopatra hap rather taken the part of Brutus.[1] The beauty and talents of Cleopatra soon made a complete conquest of the gay and joyous Antony, and this play begins in Egypt with the surprise or disgust of two among Antony's military followers, Philo and Demetrius, at the thorough captivation of their leader by this artful princess.

In Cleopatra's palace at Alexandria, Philo says to Demetrius in regretful wonder:

> "Nay, but this dotage of our general's
> O'erflows the measure; those his goodly eyes,
> That o'er the files and musters of the war
> Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
> The office and devotion of their view
> Upon a tawny front,"

alluding apparently to Cleopatra's dark complexion. Antony, with Cleopatra, approaches while he is speaking, and he exclaims at sight of them to Demetrius:

> "Take but good note, and you shall see in him
> The triple pillar of the world transform'd
> Into a strumpet's fool; behold and see."

This expression, "triple pillar," of course means Antony's position as triumvir; but his two colleagues, Octavius and

[1] Lempriere's "Dictionary."

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Lepidus, are now absent, and Antony is enjoying sole authority in Egypt. His first scene with Cleopatra proves more perhaps than any other the complete power she has acquired over him. Despite her "tawny" or gipsy-like complexion, the fascinating charms of this extraordinary queen have thoroughly enslaved her nominal Roman conqueror. Antony's enslavement, however, may not have been a very hard task for this artful woman to effect, after the experience she had derived in the art of captivation by her previous ascendancy over Pompey and Julius Cæsar in succession. After her conquest over such illustrious, strong-minded men as these, her captivating the voluptuous Antony, who, despite some great qualities, was an inferior man to both, is not much to be wondered at. She evidently wishes to stir up strife between Antony and his young colleague Octavius, now in Rome, where Antony's wife, Fulvia, resides also. Messengers from Rome are announced, whom Antony, thoroughly happy with Cleopatra, is in no hurry to hear, but she artfully exclaims:

> "Nay, hear them, Antony:
> Fulvia, perchance, is angry; or, who knows
> If the scarce-bearded Cæsar have not sent
> His powerful mandate to you, '*Do this, or that,*
> *Take in that kingdom, and enfranchise that;*
> *Perform't, or else we damn thee.*'"

Antony is startled at these words, and seems hardly to understand their full meaning, and she, then pretending to be jealously fond of Antony, says, really afraid for her own future safety:

> "Perchance! nay, and most like;
> You must not stay here longer; your dismission
> Is come from Cæsar; therefore hear it, Antony.
> Where's Fulvia's process? Cæsar's I would say? both?
> Call in the messengers. As I am Egypt's queen,
> Thou blushest, Antony, and that blood of thine
> Is Cæsar's homager; else so thy cheek pays shame
> When shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds. The messengers!"

Still Antony will not summon them, but exclaims, completely yielding to Cleopatra's influence, and alienated from

all Roman friends, duties, and interests, as if in a fanciful dream:

"Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space.
. . . . . .
The nobleness of life
Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair [*Embracing.*
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless."

Thus praising himself and Cleopatra, yet knowing their strange alliance is full of danger from the Roman world, Antony hopes to attach Cleopatra solely to himself, but she is more selfish as well as more artful than such a man is able to imagine. She says, apparently to herself, at hearing his words:

"Excellent falsehood!
Why did he marry Fulvia and not love her?
I'll seem the fool I am not;"

Then addressing Antony she says:

"Antony
Will be himself."

The infatuated general replies:

"But stirr'd by Cleopatra."

Then, completely relapsing into voluptuous self-indulgence, the amorous warrior proceeds:

"Now, for the love of Love and her soft hours,
Let's not confound the time with conference harsh:
There's not a minute of our lives should stretch
Without some pleasure now. What sport to-night?"

Cleopatra, ever crafty, watchful, and practical, perseveringly repeats:

"Hear the ambassadors."

Antony, provoked at their very mention in the midst of his selfish enjoyments, replies with passionate fondness:

"Fie, wrangling queen!
Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh,
To weep; whose every passion fully strives
To make itself, in thee, fair and admired.
No messenger; but thine, and all alone,
To-night we'll wander through the streets and note
The qualities of people. Come, my queen;
Last night you did desire it:"

Then, addressing his attendants, he scornfully says :

"Speak not to us,"

and departs with his royal enchantress. His Roman followers can indeed hardly recognise in this reckless profligate the astute orator and able soldier who had made Rome ring with his triumphs, both in eloquence and in battle, and Demetrius astonished, knowing the position of Octavius Cæsar in Rome, exclaims :

"Is Cæsar with Antonius prized so slight?"

Philo, fully sympathising with his fellow Roman, can only answer :

"Sir, sometimes when he is not Antony,
He comes too short of that great property
Which still should go with Antony,"

and Demetrius, apprehending the anger of the Romans at Antony's present conduct confirming the reports of his foes, rejoins :

"I am full sorry
That he approves the common liar, who
Thus speaks of him at Rome; but I will hope
Of better deeds to-morrow."

In this hope Demetrius may show some knowledge of Antony, as the next scene indicates, though it begins with a strange talk between Cleopatra's ladies-in-waiting, Charmian and Iras and a eunuch named Alexas, with a soothsayer. The common idea of "like mistress, like maid," is apparently proved here, as these two attendants, by their loose, dissolute talk, reveal the state of the Egyptian palace at this extraordinary time. Charmian, as if following her voluptuous mistress's example, though without showing her talents, rallies the eunuch, who summons a soothsayer to tell this lively lady's fortune, while the Roman Enobarbus, a man devoted to Antony, enters, and calls for wine to drink Cleopatra's health. Under the patronage, or in the service of such a pair, the wild dissipated talk of their attendants is natural enough. Charmian gaily addresses the fortune-teller :

'Good now, some excellent fortune! Let me be married to three kings in a forenoon, and widow them all; let me have a child at fifty, to whom Herod

of Jewry may do homage; find me to marry me with Octavius Cæsar, and companion me with my mistress."

Octavius was probably at this time the most powerful of known rulers, except his colleague Antony, and being much younger, was the greatest match existing for either Roman or Egyptian ladies. The soothsayer pleasantly predicts that Charmian will survive her mistress, and then tells Iras, Cleopatra's other attendant, that she and Charmian will have the like fortunes, and after some jesting with the eunuch Alexas these gay ladies are interrupted by the sudden entrance of their mistress, alarmed and agitated with good reason. It seems that Antony, after reflecting on the state of the Roman empire, has begun to remember his political duties and dangers, as Demetrius had hoped, and Cleopatra exclaims:

> "He was disposed to mirth; but on the sudden
> A Roman thought hath struck him. Enobarbus!
> Seek him and bring him hither."

Then hearing Antony is coming, she withdraws without his seeing her, and he enters with a messenger from Rome, who tells him first of the dangers there, that Sextus Pompey and Labienus, who were allied with Brutus, are still resisting the triumvirs, Octavius and Lepidus, and that his own indolent stay in Egypt is generally blamed by his fellow-countrymen. Antony, partly reproaching himself, angry and confused, exclaims to the messenger:

> "Speak to me home, mince not the general tongue;
> Name Cleopatra as she is call'd in Rome;
> Rail thou in Fulvia's phrase: and taunt my faults
> With such full license as both truth and malice
> Have power to utter."

Another messenger is announced, when Antony exclaims:

> "Let him appear."

And then, conscience-struck, adds:

> "These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,
> Or lose myself in dotage."

This new messenger announces Fulvia's death, giving a

When she interrupts, pretending to be faint:

"Help me away, dear Charmian, I shall fall:
I cannot be thus long, the sides of nature
Will not sustain it."

Antony begins:

"Now, my dearest queen——"

When she again interrupts, exclaiming:

"Pray you, stand further from me.
. . . . . .
I know, by that same eye, there's some good news.
What says the married woman? You may go:
Would she had never given you leave to come!
Let her not say 'tis I that keep you here;
I have no power upon you; hers you are."

Antony perplexed apparently, says protesting:

"The gods best know——"

But she interrupts:

"O! never was there queen
So mightily betray'd; yet at the first
I saw the treasons planted."

Antony, perhaps confused, exclaims:

"Cleopatra——"

And she again interrupts:

"Why should I think you can be mine and true,
Though you in swearing shake the throned gods,
Who have been false to Fulvia?"

Antony vainly tries to get a hearing:

"Most sweet queen——"

And she interrupts as before:

"Nay, pray you, seek no colour for your going,
But bid farewell, and go; when you sued staying
Then was the time for words; no going then:
Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows' bent; they are so still,
Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,
Art turn'd the greatest liar."

She then flashes into real or assumed anger and defiance:

"I would I had thy inches; thou shouldst know
There were a heart in Egypt."

These taunts rouse Antony's pride, and he begins with more firmness to explain his position and intentions:

"Hear me, queen;
The strong necessity of time commands
Our services awhile, but my full heart
Remains in use with you. Our Italy
Shines o'er with civil swords; Sextus Pompeius
Makes his approaches to the port of Rome;
Equality of two domestic powers
Breed scrupulous faction. The hated, grown to strength,
Are newly grown to love; the condemn'd Pompey,
Rich in his father's honour, creeps apace
Into the hearts of such as have not thrived."

Then leaving Roman politics for domestic troubles, Antony adds:

"My more particular,
And that which most with you should safe my going,
Is Fulvia's death."

Cleopatra, jealous, excited, yet always crafty, exclaims:

"Though age from folly could not give me freedom
It does from childishness: can Fulvia die?"

Antony, who in Cleopatra's presence conceals, or perhaps no longer feels, the sorrow he indicated when first hearing of his wife's death, replies:

"She's dead, my queen.
Look here, and at thy sovereign leisure read
The garboils she awaked;
See when and where she died."

Cleopatra now convinced of her rival's death, exclaims in assumed reproach:

"O most false love!
Where be the sacred vials thou shouldst fill
With sorrowful water? Now I see, I see,
In Fulvia's death, how mine received shall be."

Antony, still devoted to her, yet wearied of her raillery, his mind distracted between political dangers and her artifices, replies:

"Quarrel no more, but be prepared to know
The purposes I bear, which are or cease
As you shall give the advice. By the fire
That quickens Nilus' slime, I go from hence
Thy soldier, servant, making peace or war
As thou affect'st."

Again she pretends to faint, yet resolves to try him still further so as to attach him as much as possible to her, before he leaves Egypt. She exclaims to her attendant, who well understands her:

> "Cut my lace, Charmian, come;
> But let it be: I am quickly ill, and well;
> So Antony loves."

Antony, always deceived by her, exclaims in a kind of entreaty:

> "My precious queen, forbear,
> And give true evidence to his love which stands
> An honourable trial."

Cleopatra, artfully attributing her own deceit to this enamoured soldier, ironically retorts:

> "So Fulvia told me.
> I prithee, turn aside and weep for her;
> Then bid adieu to me, and say the tears
> Belong to Egypt: good now, play one scene
> Of excellent dissembling, and let it look
> Like perfect honour."

Antony, excited, perhaps provoked, yet quite under her influence, exclaims almost pitifully:

> "You'll heat my blood; no more."

Cleopatra, calmly watching him, replies:

> "You can do better yet, but this is meetly."

Antony, yet more excited, protests:

> "Now, by my sword——"

Cleopatra sarcastically interrupts:

> "And target. Still he mends;
> But this is not the best,"

then appealing to her cunning confidante, who, though dutifully silent, hears all this scene:

> "Look, prithee, Charmian,
> How this Herculean Roman does become
> The carriage of his chafe"

Antony, apparently unable to endure any longer the raillery of the one, and the observant looks of the other, exclaims abruptly:

> "I'll leave you, lady."

Then Cleopatra, exerting her wonderful powers of mingled cajolery and self-control, slightly notices his bluntness, and then becomes sentimental:

"Courteous lord, one word.
Sir, you and I must part, but that's not it:
Sir, you and I have loved, but there's not it;
That you know well; something it is I would,—
O! my oblivion is a very Antony,
And I am all forgotten."

Antony, whose whole mind is divided between love and ambition, though captivated by Cleopatra, never quite understands her extraordinary arts and pretences, can now only exclaim:

"But that your royalty
Holds idleness your subject, I should take you
For idleness itself."

Cleopatra, perceiving he is quite determined to go, and knowing besides his political danger from his fellow-countrymen if he remains longer in Egypt, reconciles herself to his departure, but resolves to please him to the last, by words and wishes she knows will specially gratify a Roman warrior, and exclaims:

"Your honour calls you hence;
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,
And all the gods go with you! Upon your sword
Sit laurel victory, and smooth success
Be strew'd before your feet!"

Antony, quite confirmed in love for her by these words, hating to leave Egypt, yet knowing his life and fortune depend on his hastening to Rome, exclaims in mingled sadness and excitement:

"Come;
Our separation so abides and flies,
That thou, residing here, go'st yet with me,
And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee."

The next scene is in Rome, where Octavius Cæsar is reading a letter from Egypt to his fellow-triumvir, Lepidus. This man, whom Antony had ridiculed to Octavius, and proposed to dismiss, the shrewd young Cæsar had evidently befriended all along. He had mildly protested against Antony's censure of Lepidus before,

without having then the power to vindicate the despised triumvir. Now, however, Octavius is in a stronger position, while Antony is in Egypt, and Sextus Pompey, son of Julius Cæsar's great rival, is still at war with the Roman Triumvirate, whose authority he had never acknowledged. In this scene Octavius displays that marvellous calmness and determination which always distinguished him, while Lepidus, a comparatively dull, though brave officer, little knows Antony, who is well understood by the calm, discerning mind of Octavius. The latter now gravely censures his absent colleague more in the style of an old man blaming a reckless youth, than a young man condemning an older one:

> "From Alexandria
> This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes
> The lamps of night in revel; is not more man-like
> Than Cleopatra,
> . . . . .
> Hardly gave audience, or
> Vouchsafed to think he had partners; you shall find there
> A man who is the abstract of all faults
> That all men follow."

Lepidus, unsuspicious, perhaps stupid, and little guessing Antony's contempt for himself, which Octavius had evidently never told him, rather good-naturedly tries to excuse Antony:

> "I must not think there are
> Evils enow to darken all his goodness;
> His faults in him seem as the spots in heaven,
> More fiery by night's blackness; hereditary
> Rather than purchased; what he cannot change
> Than what he chooses."

Octavius, ever practical, replies with stern calmness:

> "You are too indulgent,"

and then proceeds to examine Antony's conduct and character in a way not very complimentary to that gay and joyous general:

> "Let us grant it is not
> Amiss to tumble on the bed of Pompey,
> To give a kingdom for a mirth, to sit
> And keep the turn of tippling with a slave,
> To reel the streets at noon, say this becomes him,

As his composure must be rare indeed
Whom these things cannot blemish, yet must Antony
No way excuse his soils, when we do bear
So great weight in his lightness.
. . . . . .
But to confound such time
That drums him from his sport, and speaks as loud
As his own state and ours, 'tis to be chid
As we rate boys, who being mature in knowledge,
Pawn their experience to their present pleasure,
And so rebel to judgment."

A messenger now announces the success and power of Sextus Pompey at sea, and the strength of pirates in the Mediterranean. He exclaims:

"Cæsar, I bring thee word,
Menecrates and Menas, famous pirates,
Make the sea serve them, which they ear[1] and wound
With keels of every kind; many hot inroads
They make in Italy;
. . . . . .
No vessel can peep forth, but 'tis as soon
Taken as seen; for Pompey's name strikes more
Than could his war resisted."

The name of Pompey, the foe of his race, irritates the calm listening Cæsar, and he exclaims, speaking from his heart, as if addressing his absent colleague:

"Antony,
Leave thy lascivious wassails,"

and recalls some of Antony's former hardships and triumphs, comparing these with his present conduct, while even the indolent Lepidus exclaims:

"'Tis pity of him."

But Octavius, firm and resolute, rejoins:

"Let his shames quickly
Drive him to Rome. 'Tis time we twain
Did show ourselves i' the field; and to that end
Assemble we immediate council; Pompey
Thrives in our idleness.'

Lepidus agrees, but though perhaps not very wise, yet as a brave officer, he says to Cæsar:

"Farewell, my lord. What you shall know meantime
Of stirs abroad, I shall beseech you, sir,
To let me be partaker."

[1] Plough.

Octavius, always politic, has no wish yet to quarrel with his fellow-triumvir, and replies politely:

> "Doubt not, sir;
> I knew it for my bond."

The next scene reverts to Cleopatra's palace at Alexandria, where the queen is full of anxiety about the absent Antony. This anxiety is caused alike by her personal interests and her affection for him, for though nominally queen of Egypt, Cleopatra is really a subject of Rome and of its successive rulers. To Rome she has always looked for political guidance, direction, and support; she apparently, at least in the play, admits no Asiatic or African rulers to her intimacy. All her talents or resources are at the service of the various rulers at Rome, the capital at this time of nearly all the civilised world. Thus Cleopatra has in succession attracted and influenced Pompey, Julius Cæsar, and lastly Antony, but the continued civil war in the Roman empire now endangers her authority, if not her safety. It is only by her keen knowledge of character, craft, and rare talents that she has hitherto maintained her high and luxurious position in the subjected land of Egypt, now merely a province of the vast Roman empire. Cleopatra, knowing or correctly apprehending Antony's dangerous position in Rome, owns to her confidante Charmian, while recalling former Roman admirers, her present anxiety about her last one:

> "O Charmian!
> Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he, or sits he?
> Or is he on his horse?
> O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!
> Do bravely, horse, for wott'st thou whom thou movest?
> The demi-Atlas of this earth, the arm
> And burgonet of men."

From these words she apparently rather overrates Antony's present power, as hitherto she knows little about Octavius, and she proceeds, still thinking of nothing but Antony, now both her lover and protector:

> "He's speaking now,
> Or murmuring '*Where's my serpent of old Nile?*'
> For so he calls me."

The elderly beauty perhaps begins to fear her attractions are waning as she proceeds, hoping but not sure that she still fascinates Antony:

"Now I feed myself
With most delicious poison. Think on me,
That am with Phœbus' amorous pinches black.
And wrinkled deep in time? Broad-fronted Cæsar,
When thou wast here above the ground I was
A morsel for a monarch, and great Pompey
Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow;
There would he anchor his aspect and die
With looking on his life."

She thus meditates on Cæsar, Pompey, and Antony, men whose ages were not very different from each other, and were in turn her successive admirers. But younger men, Sextus Pompey and Octavius Cæsar, the son and the nephew of her former lovers, are now contending for the Roman empire, and though Cleopatra was termed one "whom age could not wither," yet her own self-allusion as "wrinkled deep in time" indicates a somewhat different and inevitable consciousness. Alexas now enters, bringing a message from Antony, couched in these singular words:

"'*Say, the firm Roman to great Egypt sends*
This treasure of an oyster; at whose foot,
To mend the petty present, I will piece
Her opulent throne with kingdoms; all the east
Say thou, shall call her mistress.'"

Cleopatra:

"What! was he sad or merry?"

Alexas:

"Like to the time o' the year between the extremes
Of hot and cold; he was nor sad nor merry."

Cleopatra, full of hope, and on the whole gratified, exclaims:

"O well-divided disposition! Note him,
Note him, good Charmian, 'tis the man, but note him;
He was not sad, for he would shine on those
That made their looks by his; he was not merry,
Which seem'd to tell them his remembrance lay
In Egypt with his joy; but between both:
O heavenly mingle!
. . . . .
Mett'st thou my posts?"

Alexas:

"Ay, madam, twenty several messengers.
Why do you send so thick?"

Cleopatra, whose present affection and worldly interest direct the same course of action, eagerly replies:

"Who's born that day
When I forget to send to Antony,
Shall die a beggar. Ink and paper, Charmian.
. . . . . .
Did I, Charmian,
Ever love Cæsar so?"

This rather trying question evidently diverts Charmian, who, though afraid of her capricious, vehement mistress, now ventures, though it is playing with fire, to slightly provoke her by recalling her praises of Cæsar; and perhaps imitating her voice and manner, she exclaims, probably amusing herself and Alexas:

"O! that brave Cæsar."

Cleopatra, partly provoked, impatiently retorts:

"Be choked with such another emphasis!
Say, *the brave Antony.*"

Charmian, evidently amused, ventures once, but only once again to provoke her in the same way, exclaiming:

"The valiant Cæsar!"

Then Cleopatra, losing patience, exclaims apparently in real anger:

"By Isis, I will give thee bloody teeth,
If thou with Cæsar paragon again
My man of men."

Charmian hastens to pacify her by a humble reminder:

"By your most gracious pardon,
I sing but after you."

Cleopatra cannot deny this, and merely replies:

"My salad days,
When I was green in judgment, cold in blood,
To say as I said then!"

But evidently her "man of men" varies with Roman political history, and at present Antony is alike her hope and strength. The next act and scene introduces Sextus Pompey with his pirate allies, Menecrates and Menas, at

Messina in council. Pompey is gay and confident of success, trusting to his own popularity, and ridiculing Antony, whose intrigue with Cleopatra is naturally blamed and despised among all Romans at this time.

Pompey:

"The people love me, and the sea is mine;
. . . . . .
Mark Antony
In Egypt sits at dinner, and will make
No wars without doors; Cæsar gets money where
He loses hearts; Lepidus flatters both,
Of both is flatter'd; but he neither loves,
Nor either cares for him."

In this account Pompey rather disparages or underrates his foes when he is told that Cæsar and Lepidus with large forces are coming against him. Pompey disbelieves this news, and amuses himself by ridiculing what he and young Cæsar may consider the two elderly lovers, Antony and Cleopatra.

Pompey:

"'Tis false.
. . . . . .
I know they are in Rome together,
Looking for Antony. But all the charms of love,
Salt Cleopatra, soften thy waned lip!
Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both!
Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts,
Keep his brain fuming; Epicurean cooks
Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite,
That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honour
Even till a Lethe'd dulness!"

Pompey is now told by his adherent Varrius that Antony is expected in Rome immediately, which news surprises him, as he exclaims:

"I did not think
This amorous surfeiter would have donn'd his helm
For such a petty war; his soldiership
Is twice the other twain."

Pompey well knows that neither Octavius nor Lepidus has the martial fame or genius of Antony, and he now resolves on further strife, and departs with his friends, saying like a devout Pagan:

"Be't as our gods will have't! It only stands
Our lives upon to use our strongest hands."

In the next scene Lepidus is at Rome, he always shows common-sense and a conciliatory spirit, though without the ambition or talents of Octavius and Antony, he urges the latter's adherent, Enobarbus, to make peace between his fellow-triumvirs. Enobarbus possesses some influence with Antony, and thoroughly understands the artifices of Cleopatra, which he so well described to his voluptuous chief when mentioning her "celerity in dying." Yet Enobarbus is solely devoted to Antony's interests, while Lepidus wishes supreme power to be fairly divided between these great leaders. All the triumvirs now appear together, and Lepidus addresses the others in a conciliatory style:

> "Noble friends,
> That which combined us was most great, and let not
> A leaner action rend us. What's amiss,
> May it be gently heard; when we debate
> Our trivial difference loud, we do commit
> Murder in healing wounds; then, noble partners,
> . . . . . .
> Touch you the sourest points with sweetest terms."

This quiet peace-making at first has little effect on the haughty spirits of Octavius and Antony, who now face each other in a spirit so different from that of their former friendship. Octavius, the future Augustus, inheriting the pride of his race, possesses a rare, far-seeing philanthropy little known at his period, and which always seems to raise him above both friends and foes. Antony's pride and true glory are entirely in the past, and thus the old and the young man, the rising and the setting sun of the glorious Roman empire, now confront each other with mutual distrust. These fiery spirits at once begin to quarrel, but they are now watched by mediators anxious to make them friends. Antony haughtily exclaims to Cæsar:

> "I learn, you take things ill which are not so,
> Or being, concern you not.
> . . . . . .
> My being in Egypt, Cæsar,
> What was't to you?"

This irritating question Octavius answers with admirable spirit, yet perfect self-control:

"No more than my residing here in Rome
Might be to you in Egypt; yet, if you there
Did practise on my state, your being in Egypt
Might be my question."

They continue a wordy dispute till Octavius brings matters to a point by saying:

"I wrote to you
When rioting in Alexandria; you
Did pocket up my letters, and with taunts
Did gibe my missive out of audience."

Antony tries to excuse himself for a certain degree of intemperance, answering:

"Sir,
He fell upon me ere admitted; then
Three kings I had newly feasted, and did want
Of what I was i' the morning; but next day
I told him of myself, which was as much
As to have ask'd him pardon. Let this fellow
Be nothing of our strife; if we contend
Out of our question wipe him."

Still young Cæsar is not satisfied, and, feeling his position strong in Rome at present, while Antony's is decidedly weakened, continues to coolly reproach him:

"You have broken
The article of your oath, which you shall never
Have tongue to charge me with."

Lepidus, anxious for peace, here exclaims as in remonstrance:

"Soft, Cæsar!"

But Antony firmly exclaims:

"No,
Lepidus, let him speak:"

Cæsar then charges Antony with denying him the assistance he needed, and Antony, now among Romans, is forced to allude, despite his pride, to the "poison'd hours" in Egypt which had "bound him from his own knowledge," and that he so far asks pardon as befits his honour "to stoop in such a case." Lepidus and Mecænas,

the latter always devoted to Octavius, longing to make peace between the triumvirs, joyfully hail this apology, urging Octavius to accept it, while Enobarbus, fearless and outspoken, urges the same, though in a different style. Lepidus, delighted at Antony's excuse, says:

"Tis noble spoken."

Mecænas wisely advises:

"If it might please you, to enforce no further
The griefs between ye:"

Enobarbus bluntly observes:

"Or, if you borrow one another's love for the instant, you may, when you hear no more words of Pompey, return it again: you shall have time to wrangle in when you have nothing else to do."

Antony, knowing doubtless that Octavius is too strong for him in Rome, rather checks his adherent for presumption, imperiously saying:

"Thou art a soldier only; speak no more."

Octavius then says with cool gravity:

"I do not much dislike the matter, but
The manner of his speech;
. . . . . .
Yet if I knew
What hoop should hold us stanch, from edge to edge
Of the world I would pursue it."

This consent to be friends with Antony induces Agrippa, Cæsar's adherent, to make an important suggestion to him:

"Give me leave, Cæsar.
Thou hast a sister by the mother's side,
Admired Octavia; great Mark Antony
Is now a widower."

Cæsar sarcastically exclaims:

"Say not so, Agrippa;
If Cleopatra heard you, your reproof
Wert well deserved of rashness."

Antony assures Cæsar that he is not married, and Agrippa, who apparently has the confidence of both to some extent, then declares that a marriage between Octavia and Antony would be an excellent means of

reconciling the two triumvirs. He ends his politic suggestion:

> "By this marriage,
> All little jealousies which now seem great,
> And all great fears which now import their dangers,
> Would then be nothing;
> . . . . .
> Pardon what I have spoke,
> For 'tis a studied, not a present thought,
> By duty ruminated."

The suggestion seems acceptable to all present, and Antony exclaims:

> "What power is in Agrippa,
> If I would say, '*Agrippa, be it so,*'
> To make this good?"

Octavius then replies:

> "The power of Cæsar, and
> His power unto Octavia."

From this ready assent it seems likely that Cæsar and and his friend Agrippa had agreed upon this idea previously, in case of Antony's making the apology he did. Antony now eagerly rejoins, as if forgetting Cleopatra in his Roman ambition:

> "May I never
> To this good purpose, that so fairly shows,
> Dream of impediment! Let me have thy hand;
> Further this act of grace, and from this hour
> The heart of brothers govern in our loves
> And sway our great designs!"

Cæsar, proud and gratified, yet always watchful, rejoins:

> "There is my hand.
> A sister I bequeath you, whom no brother
> Did ever love so dearly; let her live
> To join our kingdoms and our hearts, and never
> Fly off our loves again!"

The peace-loving Lepidus delightedly exclaims:

> "Happily, amen!"

and the triumvirs depart consulting one another about the war with Sextus Pompey. When they are gone, Enobarbus, Agrippa, and Mecænas, the respective adherents of Antony and of Cæsar, hold a remarkable conference together. These men evidently well know the

different characters of their leaders, and are all three devoted to the interests of the Roman empire. The wonderful influence of Cleopatra over Antony is a cause of regret and apprehension to each, and Enobarbus, from his luxurious stay in Egypt and his personal knowledge of her, is able to enlighten his fellow Romans on the subject of Antony's captivation by this artful queen. Mecænas, alluding to Egyptian luxury, says to Enobarbus:

"You stayed well by't in Egypt."

And the other replies:

"Ay, sir; we did sleep day out of countenance, and made the night light with drinking."

Mecænas, a practical Roman, not used to Oriental luxury asks:

"Eight wild boars roasted whole at a breakfast, and but twelve persons there; is this true?" [1]

Enobarbus, who perhaps rather exaggerates for the pleasure of seeing the other's wonder, replies:

"This was but as a fly by an eagle; we had much more monstrous matter of feast, which worthily deserved noting."

Mecænas, who had apparently never seen Cleopatra but has heard Roman reports about her, exclaims:

"She's a most triumphant lady, if report be square to her."

Then Enobarbus launches forth into a beautiful and graphic, though perhaps over-coloured description of Cleopatra's first meeting with Antony, exclaiming to his two interested and wondering hearers:

"She pursed up his heart, upon the river of Cydnus
. . . . . .
The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burn'd on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them, the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of the flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,

[1] Plutarch's "Life of Antony."

It beggar'd all description; she did lie
In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold of tissue,
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature; on each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool.
And what they undid did."

Agrippa, like most Romans, knowing Antony's voluptuous nature, and that this beautiful scene was arranged by Cleopatra to specially attract him, here exclaims:

"O! rare for Antony,"

while Enobarbus proceeds in his glowing, yet partly true description:[1]

"Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes,
And made their bends adorning; at the helm
A seeming mermaid steers; the silken tackle
Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands.
From the barge
A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
Her people out upon her, and Antony
Enthron'd i' the market-place, did sit alone,
Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too
And made a gap in nature."

Agrippa, as if overcome by this splendid description, exclaims:

"Rare Egyptian!"

and Enobarbus then narrates with evident pride, though with a little exaggeration, and perhaps a touch of ridicule, his chief Antony's devotion to women, and his persevering efforts to look at his best before his enslaver.

"Upon her landing Antony sent to her,
Invited her to supper; she replied
It should be better he became her guest,
Which she entreated. Our courteous Antony,
Whom ne'er the word of '*No*,' woman heard speak,
Being barber'd ten times o'er, goes to the feast,
And for his ordinary pays his heart
For what his eyes eat only."

[1] This account seems founded on Plutarch's authority, on whom Shakespeare chiefly relies in some classical plays. (See "Life of Antony.")

The three Romans, the narrator and his listeners, wonder at Cleopatra's charms and abilities, when Mecænas, referring to Antony's proposed marriage to Octavia, says that now Antony must altogether abandon Cleopatra; he says this with evident sincerity, being himself quite devoted to the interests of Cæsar, but Enobarbus, who best knows both Cleopatra and Antony, replies:

> "Never; he will not.
> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety."

Mecænas, who highly appreciates Octavia, naturally exclaims:

> "If beauty, wisdom, modesty can settle
> The heart of Antony, Octavia is
> A blessed lottery to him."

The three depart, Enobarbus being Agrippa's guest during the former's stay in Rome, and the next scene introduces Cæsar with his sister Octavia and Antony, who now plays a rather hypocritical part in assuming regret at leaving Octavia. He exclaims:

> "The world and my great office will sometimes
> Divide me from your bosom."

Octavia, unsuspicious and pure-minded, replies:

> "All which time
> Before the gods my knees shall bow my prayers
> To them for you."

Antony replies:

> "My Octavia,
> Read not my blemishes in the world's report;
> I have not kept my square, but that to come
> Shall all be done by the rule. Good-night, dear lady."

Cæsar and his sister depart, and Antony, when alone receives a soothsayer. This man is the same soothsayer before introduced in Egypt, and would seem acting in Cleopatra's interest, unless indeed he may be a sincere believer in his extraordinary art. Antony asks:

> "Now, sirrah; you do wish yourself in Egypt?"

and the man, perhaps cunningly, replies:

> "Would I had never come from thence, nor you
> Thither!
> . . . . . .
> Hie you to Egypt again."

Antony, evidently not free from the credulity or ideas of his period, asks:

"Say to me,
Whose fortunes shall rise higher, Cæsar's or mine?"

Soothsayer:

"Cæsar's.
Therefore, O Antony! stay not by his side;
Thy demon, that's thy spirit which keeps thee, is
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable,
Where Cæsar's is not; but near him thy angel
Becomes a fear, as being overpower'd; therefore
Make space enough between you."

Antony, alarmed or uneasy, yet half inclined to believe him, exclaims:

"Speak this no more."

But the soothsayer, perceiving or guessing his influence, proceeds:

"To none but thee; no more but when to thee,
If thou dost play with him at any game
Thou art sure to lose, and of that natural luck,
He beats thee 'gainst the odds; thy lustre thickens
When he shines by. I say again, thy spirit
Is all afraid to govern thee near him,
But he away, 'tis noble."

These strange, perhaps artful, words evidently prevail with Antony, who bids the soothsayer to send Ventidius, another of his adherents, to him. The soothsayer departs, and Antony when alone reveals his mind:

"He shall to Parthia. Be it art or hap
He hath spoken true; the very dice obey him,
And in our sports my better cunning faints
Under his chance; if we draw lots he speeds,
. . . . . .
I will to Egypt;
And though I make this marriage for my peace,
I' the east my pleasure lies."

He then sends off Ventidius to Parthia, but he evidently knows that Cæsar is above him at Rome, and must always be his superior there in everything. Octavius and his sister are strongly united in their mutual affection; and Antony's pride chafes at their influence and popularity with the Romans. The remembrance of Cleopatra now

overcomes him, and the words of the soothsayer complete his resolution to break off again with Octavius and to enjoy himself in Egypt. The next short scene describes the triumvir Lepidus with Mecænas and Agrippa preparing to set out on their campaign against Sextus Pompey; Lepidus bids his companions follow each his respective leader, Cæsar or Antony, intending to follow soon himself, and Agrippa cheerfully says:

> "Sir, Mark Antony
> Will e'en but kiss Octavia, and we'll follow."

Lepidus, who always seems an easy-going homely man, exclaims to both:

> "Till I shall see you in your soldier's dress,
> Which will become you both, farewell."

The next scene reverts to Alexandria, where Cleopatra with her attendants laments Antony's absence. She exclaims to Charmian:

> "We'll to the river: there,
> My music playing far off, I will betray
> Tawny-finn'd fishes; my bended hook shall pierce
> Their slimy jaws; and, as I draw them up,
> I'll think them every one an Antony,
> And say '*Ah, ha! you're caught.*'

Charmian, evidently wishing to cheer her agitated mistress, exclaims:

> "'Twas merry when
> You wager'd on your angling."

Cleopatra:

> "That time—O times!—
> I laughed him out of patience; and that night
> I laugh'd him into patience: and next morn,
> Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed;
> Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst
> I wore his sword Philippan,"

meaning the one he wore at the battle of Philippi.[1] A messenger now arrives from Rome; Cleopatra, greatly

[1] "Whether Antony were in the gay or the serious humour, still she had something ready for his amusement. She was with him night and day. She gamed, she drank, she reviewed with him."—Plutarch's "Life of Antony."

excited and apprehensive, receives the man, who is naturally afraid of what he has to tell. Cleopatra first imagines Antony is dead, and threatens the messenger before he has time to speak. He asks her to hear him, and she rejoins in excitement:

> "Well, go to, I will;
> But there's no goodness in thy face."

Despite these unpleasant words he again begs to be heard, and she exclaims:

> "I have a mind to strike thee ere thou speak'st:
> Yet if thou say Antony lives, is well,
> Or friends with Cæsar, or not captive to him,
> I'll set thee in a shower of gold, and hail
> Rich pearls upon thee."

He first pleases by saying Antony is well, and more friendly with Cæsar than ever, and, delighted at this news believing it may confirm her own power and safety, she hastily exclaims:

> "Make thee a fortune from me."

But the cause of this friendship being Antony's marriage with Octavia is next told, and Cleopatra becomes nearly frantic with rage and jealousy, perhaps mingled with fear, knowing that Antony is her political support as well as her lover. Without his protection she knows that all Roman opinion and power would be turned against her, and she strikes as well as reproaches the unlucky bearer of evil tidings, who vainly exclaims to the beautiful fury:

> "Gracious madam,
> I that do bring the news made not the match."

Cleopatra, almost beside herself with anger and passionate excitement, exclaims:

> "Say 'tis not so, a province I will give thee,
> And make thy fortunes proud."

The poor messenger, however, cannot alter his report, she draws a dagger, and he then runs away. Charmian interposes, reminding her mistress that the man is innocent, and Cleopatra, partly recovering herself, exclaims:

> "Call the slave again:
> Though I am mad, I will not bite him. Call."

Charmian says that he is afraid to come, but he re-enters with Charmian, but can only repeat his news. After he again leaves, Cleopatra, recalling her former distinguished lover in her present anger with Antony, exclaims to Charmian:

"In praising Antony I have dispraised Cæsar."

Charmian:

"Many times, madam."

Cleopatra, apparently exhausted, bitterly rejoins:

"I am paid for 't now.
Lead me from hence;
I faint."

Then full of jealous curiosity of her Roman rival, she sends Alexas to the messenger:

"Go to the fellow, good Alexas; bid him
Report the feature of Octavia, her years,
Her inclination, let him not leave out
The colour of her hair: bring me word quickly."

Then to another attendant, Mardian, she exclaims:

"Bid you Alexas
Bring me word how tall she is. Pity me, Charmian,
But do not speak to me. Lead me to my chamber."

The next scene is near Misenum, introducing the opposing leaders, Octavius Cæsar, Sextus Pompey, Antony, Lepidus, and Menas, with their respective followers, at an important conference. This is their first meeting together in the play; Sextus Pompey and Octavius Cæsar, the son and the nephew of the former noble rivals for the Roman empire, are the chief men, but Octavius is a far more worthy representative of the great Julius, his uncle, than Pompey of his heroic father. Pompey addresses the triumvirs as:

"The senators alone of this great world,
Chief factors for the gods."

Though disapproving their form of government, he proceeds:

"What was't
That moved pale Cassius to conspire? and what
Made the all honour'd, honest Roman, Brutus,
With the arm'd rest, courtiers of beauteous freedom,

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To drench the Capitol, but that they would
Have one man but a man? And that is it
Hath made me rig my navy, at whose burden
The anger'd ocean foams."

Cæsar and Antony do not argue this point, but calmly ask if he means to accept their offers of peace on certain terms. Pompey agrees, and proposes a friendly feast, which the jovial Antony welcomes, and Pompey exclaims:

"We'll feast each other ere we part; and let's
Draw lots who shall begin."

Antony:

"That will I, Pompey."

Pompey, wishing to remind Antony of his Egyptian luxuries, says:

"No, Antony, take the lot:
But first or last, your fine Egyptian cookery
Shall have the fame. I have heard that Julius Cæsar
Grew fat with feasting there."

These allusions perhaps amused all Romans present except Antony, who replies as if wincing under them:

"You have heard much."

Pompey:

"I have fair meanings, sir."

Antony:

"And fair words to them."

Pompey is continuing this talk, when Enobarbus, who well knows Cleopatra's history, alludes to a certain queen being once carried to Julius Cæsar in a mattress. Pompey recognises this gallant though talkative officer, and exclaims:

"I know thee now; how farest thou, soldier?"

and Enobarbus shrewdly replies:

Well;
And well am like to do; for I perceive
Four feasts are toward."

Pompey:

"Let me shake thy hand;
I never hated thee. I have seen thee fight,
When I have envied thy behaviour."

Antony curtly replies:

"Ay, Lepidus."

And the other continues:

"Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the operation of your sun; so is your crocodile."

Antony replies, still speaking briefly:

"They are so,"

and Pompey, apparently perceiving that Lepidus is easily made drunk, exclaims to the attendants:

"Sit,—and some wine! A health to Lepidus!"

The latter then admits rather like Cassio in Othello:

"I am not so well as I should be, but I'll ne'er out,"

when the crafty Enobarbus says to himself:

"Not till you have slept; I fear me you'll be in till then."

Lepidus, rather the worse already, goes maundering on:

"Nay, certainly I have heard the Ptolemies' pyramises are very goodly things; without contradiction, I have heard that."

The designing Menas asks Pompey to speak to him in private, but the latter, bent on fun and merry-making, puts him off, exclaiming:

"Forbear me till anon. This wine for Lepidus!"

And then the latter asks Antony to describe the crocodile. Antony complies, yet Lepidus goes on asking questions till the observant Cæsar, apparently out of patience, says aside to Antony:

"Will this description satisfy him?"

while Antony jokingly replies:

"With the health that Pompey gives him, else he is a very epicure."

Menas then solicits Pompey's attention, and the latter exclaims to the company:

"Be jolly, lords,"

and walks aside with his follower, who thus suggests the

assassination of Pompey's dangerous guests. Alluding to the triumvirs Menas says:

> "These three world-sharers these competitors,
> Are in thy vessel: let me cut the cable;
> And, when we are put off, fall to their throats:
> All there is thine."

To this atrocious proposal Pompey makes this strange answer, showing that though not troubled with moral scruples, he practically prefers present to future enjoyment:

> "Ah! this thou shouldst have done,
> And not have spoken on't. In me 'tis villainy;
> In thee 't had been good service.
> . . . . . .
> Repent that e'er thy tongue
> Hath so betray'd thine act; being done unknown,
> I should have found it afterwards well done,
> But must condemn it now. Desist, and drink."

Menas disappointed, says aside:

> "For this,
> I'll never follow thy pall'd fortunes more."

While Pompey returns to his amusement of ridiculing Lepidus, again exclaiming:

> "This health to Lepidus!"

And Antony jeeringly rejoins:

> "Bear him ashore. I'll pledge it for him,
> Pompey."

Lepidus, now unable to speak or stand, is borne off, while the shrewd Enobarbus, doubtless used to many a drinking bout, points at the attendant carrying away Lepidus, and scornfully exclaims to Menas:

> "There's a strong fellow,
> A' bears the third part of the world, man; see'st not?"

Menas, with grim wit, replies:

> "The third part then is drunk; would it were all,
> That it might go on wheels!"

Enobarbus, wishing to continue the merriment while craftily watching everybody, replies:

> "Drink thou; increase the reels."

While Pompey, merrily rallying Antony, exclaims:

> "This is not yet an Alexandrian feast."

To which the experienced Antony jovially replies

"It ripens towards it. Strike the vessels, ho!
Here is to Cæsar!"

Octavius, the liquor apparently taking some effect even on his calm nature, yet guarding against it, exclaims:

"I could well forbear 't.
It's monstrous labour, when I wash my brain,
And it grows fouler."

Antony, who has no sympathy for this idea, jovially replies:

"Be a child o' the time,"

as he himself is now, and probably usually was on such occasions, but Cæsar again protests:

"But I had rather fast from all four days
Than drink so much in one."[1]

Then Enobarbus, well knowing Antony's tastes, and wishing to gratify them, addresses him:

"Ha! my brave emperor;
Shall we dance now the Egyptian Bacchanals,
And celebrate our drink?"

Pompey, wishing to humour them, rejoins:

"Let's ha't, good soldier,"

while Antony, now thoroughly excited, joyously exclaims to all around:

"Come, let us all take hands,
Till that the conquering wine hath steep'd our sense
In soft and delicate Lethe."

Enobarbus, echoing his chief's desires, and well knowing how to gratify them, then exclaims:

"All take hands,
Make battery to our ears with the loud music;
The which I'll place you; then the boy shall sing,
The holding every man shall bear as loud
As his strong sides can volley."

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[1] The wisdom and sobriety of young Cæsar among so many topers may recall Falstaff's words about the cold-blooded yet valiant boy, Prince John of Lancaster.

"Good faith, this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me; nor a man cannot make him laugh but that's no marvel, he drinks no wine. There's never any of these demure boys come to any proof."—*Henry IV.*, Part II. Act IV.

Placing them hand in hand while the loud music sounds, the boy whoever he is, then sings, followed by all in chorus:

"Come, thou monarch of the vine,
Plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne!
In thy vats our cares be drown'd,
With thy grapes our hairs be crown'd."

The chorus, in which probably Octavius was the only reluctant singer, repeat the line:

"Cup us, till the world go round."

Octavius Cæsar, apparently the only disapproving member of this drinking party, now reveals his disgust, exclaiming:

"What would you more? Pompey, good-night. Good brother,
Let me request you off; our graver business
Frowns at this levity. Gentle lords, let's part;
You see we have burnt our cheeks; strong Enobarb
Is weaker than the wine, and mine own tongue
Splits what it speaks; the wild disguise hath almost
Antick'd us all. What needs more words? Good-night.
Good Antony, your hand."

Pompey, evidently the worse for what has passed, exclaims, as if in confused defiance:

"I'll try you on the shore,"

and Antony, in the same vein, retorts:

"And shall, sir. Give's your hand."

Pompey, not knowing if he should be angry or not, exclaims:

"O Antony!
You have my father's house. But what? we are friends.
Come down into the boat."

Enobarbus, seeing the present state of both heroes, calls out in cautious warning:

"Take heed you fall not,"

and all depart except the shrewd subordinates, Enobarbus and Menas. These worthies exchange a few words, though likely both have enjoyed themselves, they yet well know

what they are about. Menas, alluding to the drums and flutes sounding on the ship, exclaims:

> "Let Neptune hear we bid a loud farewell
> To these great fellows: sound and be hang'd! sound out!"

and they depart. The third act and next scene introduces Antony's friend, Ventidius, in Syria, after a successful campaign in Persia. This scene has little connection with the play, but shows how victorious the Romans were in foreign campaigns, despite the war between their chief men at home. Ventidius reveals to his comrade, Silius, how jealous Antony and other Roman leaders are of subordinate chiefs, whether faithful or not. Ventidius says:

> "Learn this, Silius,
> Better to leave undone than by our deed
> Acquire too high a fame when him we serve's away.
> Cæsar and Antony have ever won
> More in their officer than person;
> . . . . . .
> I could do more to do Antonius good,
> But 'twould offend him; and in his offence
> Should my performance perish."

These Roman generals are now on their way to Athens expecting to find Antony there; but the next scene is in Rome, where Enobarbus and Agrippa, respective adherents of Antony and of Octavius Cæsar, are together. Cicero's well-known idea, that a more truthful account of distinguished people is derived from their subordinates, may also inspire Shakespeare, who, in this brief talk between men of inferior station, reveals impressively the motives and characters of their leaders. Enobarbus, answering Agrippa's question, if the brothers, meaning Cæsar and Antony, are parted, says:

> "They have despatch'd with Pompey; he is gone,
> The other three are sealing. Octavia weeps
> To part from Rome; Cæsar is sad."

and he adds with mingled truth and sarcasm:

> "And Lepidus,
> Since Pompey's feast, as Menas says, is troubled
> With the green sickness."

Lepidus is throughout the butt of his acquaintances, both of high and low degree, while continuing to maintain, perhaps chiefly by personal bravery, his important position among the dangerous men, friends and foes, by whom he is surrounded. Agrippa, in apparent ridicule of the drunken triumvir, exclaims:

"'Tis a noble Lepidus,"

and Enobarbus retorts perhaps in the same spirit:

"A very fine one. O! how he loves Cæsar."

So says Antony's follower, and Cæsar's friend retorts:

"Nay, but how dearly he adores Mark Antony!"

Enobarbus, knowing the popularity of Octavius, exclaims:

"Cæsar? Why, he's the Jupiter of men."

Agrippa asks:

"What's Antony? The god of Jupiter."

In this conversation, Enobarbus, an able observer, reveals admiration for young Cæsar, whose glorious career is now beginning, and whose great qualities are gradually being more perceived by all intelligent Romans. He therefore exclaims:

"Spake you of Cæsar? How! the nonpareil!
. . . . . .
Would you praise Cæsar, say '*Cæsar*'; go no further."

Agrippa, recalling the respect of Lepidus for both these triumvirs, rejoins:

"Indeed, he plied them both with excellent praises."

when Enobarbus replies:

"But he loves Cæsar best; yet he loves Antony.
Hoo! hearts, tongues, figures, scribes, bards, poets, cannot
Think, speak, cast, write, sing, number; hoo!
His love to Antony. But as for Cæsar,
Kneel down, kneel down, and wonder."

After thus praising their leaders, these two adherents retire, and Cæsar, with Antony, Lepidus, and Octavia, enter. Octavia and Antony, now departing for Greece,

bid farewell to Cæsar, who for the present remains in Rome. Octavia and her brother, now the most powerful man in Rome, are deeply attached to one another. The crafty Antony also pretends to love Octavia, and for a short time he deceives both brother and sister. Cæsar therefore says in all sincerity, yet as if foreboding trouble:

> "Most noble Antony,
> Let not the piece of virtue, which is set
> Betwixt us as the cement of our love
> To keep it builded, be the ram to batter
> The fortress of it; for better might we
> Have loved without this mean, if on both parts
> This be not cherish'd."

Antony, as if shocked at any suspicion of what he knows to be the truth, replies:

> "Make me not offended
> In your distrust.
> . . .
> You shall not find,
> Though you be therein curious,[1] the least cause
> For what you seem to fear. So, the gods keep you,
> And make the hearts of Romans serve your ends!"

In these last words the crafty old general is utterly false, as his jealousy of Cæsar is steadily increasing, and results in their fatal enmity. Cæsar, however, believing or trying to believe him, exclaims in noble words:

> "Farewell, my dearest sister, fare thee well.
> The elements be kind to thee, and make
> Thy spirits all of comfort!"

Octavia weeping, only exclaims:

> "My noble brother!"

and Antony, as if imitating Cleopatra in deceit, with pretended sympathy observes:

> "The April's in her eyes; it is love's spring,
> And these the showers to bring it on. Be cheerful."

The two adherents, Agrippa and Enobarbus, watch this scene, keenly observing the faces of the speakers, yet are perhaps too far off to hear their words. They think that

[1] Scrupulous.

Cæsar, pained at the parting, can hardly repress his tears, while Agrippa thus reveals the emotional, yet designing character of Antony:

> "Why, Enobarbus,
> When Antony found Julius Cæsar dead
> He cried almost to roaring; and he wept
> When at Philippi he found Brutus slain."

Enobarbus, probably better acquainted with Antony's nature, coolly replies:

> "That year, indeed, he was troubled with a rheum;
> What willingly he did confound he wail'd,
> Believe't, till I wept too."

Cæsar again bids farewell to his sister, who departs with Antony, and the next scene reverts to Egypt, where Cleopatra, attended by Charmian, Iras, and Alexas, resumes her jealous enquiries about her rival Octavia. The frightened messenger from Rome is again recalled, and to him Cleopatra puts the most pressing questions:

> "Is she as tall as me?"

Messenger:

> "She is not, madam."

Cleopatra:

> "Didst hear her speak? is she shrill-tongued or low?"

Messenger:

> "Madam, I heard her speak; she is low-voiced."

Cleopatra, catching hope, exclaims eagerly:

> "That's not so good. He cannot like her long."

Charmian, thoroughly obsequious to her queen, eagerly rejoins:

> "*Like her!* O Isis! 'tis impossible."

The messenger, evidently friends with Charmian, and guessing his own interests, then describes Octavia as creeping rather than walking, adding contemptuously:

> "She shows a body rather than a life,
> A statue than a breather."

Charmian, recommending the messenger, exclaims:

> "Three in Egypt
> Cannot make better note."

Her passionate mistress, rather comforted, rejoins:

> "He's very knowing,
> I do perceive 't. There's nothing in her yet.
> The fellow has good judgement."

Charmian:

> "Excellent."

Cleopatra proceeds, addressing him:

> "Guess at her years, I prithee."

Messenger:

> "Madam,
> She was a widow."

Cleopatra, surprised and hopeful, exclaims:

> "*Widow!* Charmian, hark."

and the messenger, apparently growing bolder, and for every reason wishing to please, adds:

> "And I do think she's thirty."

Cleopatra, beginning to favour him, asks:

> "Bear'st thou her face in mind? is't long or round?"

The messenger, becoming more confident, replies:

> "Round, even to faultiness.

Cleopatra, gradually relieved, observes:

> "For the most part, too, they are foolish that are so.
> Her hair, what colour?"

The messenger, apparently now at his ease, answers:

> "Brown, madam; and her forehead
> As low as she would wish it."

Cleopatra, greatly consoled and almost grateful, rejoins:

> "There's gold for thee:
> Thou must not take my former sharpness ill.
> I will employ thee back again; I find thee
> Most fit for business."

And then when he is gone, she exclaims to Charmian, referring to Octavia.

> "Why, methinks, by him,
> This creature's no such thing."

and hoping from Octavia's reported appearance that

Antony will soon tire of her and be again devoted to herself, Cleopatra exclaims cheerfully:

"All may be well enough."

To which the complaisant Charmian dutifully replies:

"I warrant you, madam."

The next scene is in Antony's temporary abode at Athens, between Octavia and him. Antony already contemplates returning to Egypt, but now complains to Octavia of her brother, whom he accuses of making a new war on Pompey, and also of speaking contemptuously of himself. Evidently no firm friendship was likely to last long between such opposing characters as the proud, selfish, cunning Antony, and the calm, resolute, ambitious young Cæsar. Octavia, though little described in this play, yet seems one of the most amiable of Shakespeare's female characters, and to some extent resembles Cordelia in *King Lear*. A princess so mild, pure, and gentle, placed between ambitious men like Antony and young Cæsar, owing duty to both, certainly occupies a very difficult position, admirably described in her pathetic reply to her husband's complaints of her brother. She answers:

"O my good lord!
Believe not all; or, if you must believe,
Stomach not all! A more unhappy lady,
If this division chance, ne'er stood between,
Praying for both parts:
The good gods will mock me presently,
When I shall pray, '*O! bless my lord and husband,*'
Undo that prayer by crying out as loud,
'O! bless my brother.' Husband win, win brother,
Prays, and destroys the prayer, no midway
'Twixt these extremes at all."

Antony, a man utterly unworthy of Octavia, and likely incapable of quite understanding such a virtuous character, then speaks courteously about her return to Rome, which she had apparently requested, that she might mediate there between them, and says at last:

"Provide your going;
Choose your own company, and command what cost
Your heart has mind to."

The next short scene is also at Athens, between Antony's followers, Enobarbus and Eros, who perhaps naturally, though unfairly, blame Cæsar for his quarrel with their leader, evidently foreseeing a war between them. It seems that the dull Lepidus has now also offended Cæsar, so that the Triumvirate is completely broken up. Eros exclaims, indignant against Cæsar, and alluding to Lepidus:

"Cæsar, having made use of him in the wars 'gainst Pompey, presently denied him rivality, would not let him partake in the glory of the action; and, not resting here, accuses him of letters he had formerly wrote to Pompey; upon his own appeal, seizes him; so the poor third is up, till death enlarge his confine."[1]

Enobarbus:

"Then, world,
. . . . . .
Throw between them all the food thou hast,
They'll grind the one the other. Where's Antony?"

Eros:

"He's walking in the garden—thus: and spurs
The rush that lies before him; cries, '*Fool Lepidus!*'"

Antony evidently foresees and regrets Cæsar's absolute power in Rome, and despises the unlucky Lepidus for being so easily deposed by his youthful yet far more astute colleague. The following scene is in Rome, where Cæsar, with his future great minister Mecænas and his adherent Agrippa, are indignant with Antony. Cæsar's anger is now almost beyond the control of his firm spirit, and he informs his two confidants that Antony, now in Egypt, is behaving like an absolute ruler, and again under Cleopatra's influence. Cæsar, addressing both, says:

"Concemning Rome, he has done all this, and more,
. . . . . .
In Alexandria; here's the manner of 't;
I' the market-place, on a tribunal silver'd,
Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold
Were publicly enthroned."

In this denunciation of Antony, Cæsar mentions Cleopatra's reputed son by Julius Cæsar called Cæsarion;

[1] Participation.

but this youth, who was probably an interesting character, being born of such illustrious parents, and well worthy of description, is never introduced in this play. Mecænas and Agrippa, with the shocked feelings of proud Romans, exclaim to Cæsar:

"Let Rome be thus
Inform'd."

Agrippa:

"Who, queasy with his insolence
Already, will their good thoughts call from him."

Cæsar then says Antony is making accusation against him of having made war on Sextus Pompey, and adds:

"Lastly, he frets
That Lepidus of the Triumvirate
Should be deposed; and being, that we detain
All his revenue.
. . . . . .
I have told him, Lepidus was grown too cruel;
That he his high authority abused,
And did deserve his change."

During Cæsar's censure on Antony and Lepidus, no longer his fellow-triumvirs, Octavia appears, returned from Greece to Rome. Though Cæsar knows all about Antony's late proceedings, Octavia has heard nothing of them, and he with affectionate sympathy asks:

"Why have you stol'n upon us thus?
. . . . . .
The wife of Antony
Should have an army for an usher, and
The neighs of horse to tell of her approach
Long ere she did appear;
. . . . . .
We should have met you
By sea and land, supplying every stage
With an augmented greeting."

Octavia innocently replies in explanation:

"To come thus was I not constrain'd, but did it
On my free will. My lord, Mark Antony,
Hearing that you prepared for war, acquainted
My grieved ear withal; whereon, I begg'd
His pardon for return."

Cæsar, with suppressed yet deep indignation against Antony, scornfully replies:

"Which soon he granted,
Being an obstruct 'tween his lust and him."

Octavia, surprised and shocked, exclaims:

"Do not say so, my lord."

and he replies:

"I have eyes upon him,
And his affairs come to me on the wind.
Where is he now?"

Evidently Cæsar employs spies on Antony, and knows thus all about him, while Octavia, quite unsuspicious, replies:

"My lord, in Athens."

Then comes the terrible revelation from her fond brother's lips:

"No, my most wronged sister; Cleopatra
Hath nodded him to her."

He then tells Octavia that Antony is inciting the many tributary kings obeying Rome to revolt against him who is now acknowledged as chief ruler at Rome, and then adds a beautiful greeting:

"Welcome to Rome;
Nothing more dear to me. You are abused
Beyond the mark of thought, and the high gods,
To do you justice, make their ministers
Of us and those that love you. Best of comfort,
And ever welcome to us."

The wise statesman Mecænas, destined to future fame under young Cæsar, then addresses Octavia in respectful and sympathetic words:

"Welcome, dear madam.
Each heart in Rome does love and pity you;
Only the adulterous Antony, most large
In his abominations, turns you off,
And gives his potent regiment[1] to a trull
That noises it against us."

Octavia, always mild and calm, only exclaims:

"Is it so, sir?"

And her brother, resolutely awaiting the future for which his firm spirit seems always prepared, replies:

"Most certain. Sister, welcome; pray you,
Be ever known to patience; my dear'st sister!"

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[1] Rule.

Amid all the ambitious warriors and dangerous intrigues at this stormy period, Octavius and his sister seem to represent a moral and enlightened age, and to understand or appreciate each other more than any one else understands them. The next scene reverts to Egypt, at Antony's camp, where Cleopatra quarrels with Enobarbus, Antony's follower, who now foresees his leader's ruin under her influence in the coming war with Cæsar, and irritates her by opposing her being with Antony in war time. He says:

"Your presence needs must puzzle Antony;
Take from his heart, take from his brain, from's time,
What should not then be spared. He is already
Traduced for levity, and 'tis said in Rome
That Photinus an eunuch and your maids
Manage this war."

Cleopatra answers this reasonable remonstrance with a burst of passion denouncing Rome and Romans:

"Sink Rome, and their tongues rot
That speak against us! A charge we bear i' the war,
And, as the president of my kingdom, will
Appear there for a man. Speak not against it;
I will not stay behind."

Enobarbus, knowing he can prevail nothing against her, helplessly replies:

"Nay, I have done."

And Antony enters, whom she persuades to oppose Cæsar by sea, against the advice of Enobarbus and another officer Canidius. Antony in this case, as in others, yields to her, and Enobarbus foresees the unfortunate result. The Egyptian fleet took to flight either through fear or treachery, Antony himself follows it, while his Roman adherents Enobarbus, Scarus, and Canidius, despair of Antony, and view him as almost a madman, hopelessly opposing the victorious young Cæsar, who now heads and represents by far the majority of their fellow-countrymen. Enobarbus exclaims full of shame at beholding the Egyptian flight:

"Naught, naught, I can behold no longer.
The Antoniad, the Egyptian admiral,
With all their sixty, fly, and turn the rudder;
To see't mine eyes are blasted."

His fellow adherent Scarus now enters full of passionate indignation at the disgraceful flight, and laying the blame on Cleopatra, Enobarbus asks:

"What's thy passion?"

and Scarus replies:

"The greater cantle of the world is lost
With very ignorance; we have kiss'd away
Kingdoms and provinces.
. . . . . .
Yon ribaudred nag of Egypt,
Whom leprosy o'ertake! i' the midst of the fight,
. . . . . .
Hoists sails and flies."

Enobarbus:

"That I beheld:
Mine eyes did sicken at the sight."

Scarus continues:

"She once being loof'd,
The noble ruin of her magic, Antony,
Claps on his sea-wing, and like a doting mallard,
Leaving the fight in height, flies after her.
I never saw an action of such shame."

Canidius appears with the same news, and intends joining Cæsar, while Enobarbus and Scarus, though losing all confidence in Antony, cannot resolve yet to desert him. Canidius exclaims:

"To Cæsar will I render
My legions and my horse; six kings already
Show me the way of yielding."

He likely alludes to some tributary princes under Roman rule, but Enobarbus replies:

"I'll yet follow
The wounded chance of Antony, though my reason
Sits in the wind against me."

The next scene shows Antony in Alexandria with attendants. His proud spirit humbled yet confused by sudden defeat, now in the temporary absence of Cleopatra his evil genius reveals itself partly in words of great power. They seem a confused record of former triumphs, mingled with utter depression while under Cleopatra's fatal in-

fluence, which he knows is hastening his ruin yet cannot resist. He exclaims:

"Hark! the land bids me tread no more upon't;
It is ashamed to bear me. Friends, come hither;
I am so lated in the world that I
Have lost my way for ever. I have a ship
Laden with gold; take that, divide it; fly,
And make your peace with Cæsar."

His devoted followers exclaim:

"Fly! not we."

and he rejoins in remorseful despair:

"I have fled myself, and have instructed cowards
To run and show their shoulders,
Friends, be gone;
I have myself resolved upon a course
Which has no need of you; be gone:
My treasure's in the harbour, take it.
. . . . . .
Friends, be gone; you shall
Have letters from me to some friends that will
Sweep your way for you. Pray you, look not sad,
Leave me, I pray, a little; pray you now:
Nay, do so; for, indeed, I have lost command,
Therefore I pray you. I'll see you by and by." [*Sits down.*

While Antony is thus unable to speak more, overcome both in mind and body by emotion, Cleopatra enters led as if exhausted by Charmian and Iras, while Eros, Antony's faithful adherent, follows them. Antony at first seems almost too confused to recognise her, and his distracted mind vaguely reverts to scenes of his former triumphs. He exclaims as if to himself:

"I struck
The lean and wrinkled Cassius; and 'twas I
That the mad Brutus ended:
. . . . .
Yet now—No matter."

Eros, perceiving his absence of mind, announces Cleopatra's presence, and he then exclaims in sad reproach:

"O! whither hast thou led me, Egypt?"

while she replies:

"Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought
You would have followed."

and he rejoins, evidently relenting:

> "Egypt, thou knew'st too well
> My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings,
> And thou shouldst tow me after; o'er my spirit
> Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that
> Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods
> Command me."

Cleopatra exclaims:

> "O! my pardon."

and Antony, yielding yet more, continues:

> "Now I must
> To the young man send humble treaties, dodge
> And palter in the shifts of lowness,
> . . . . . .
> You did know
> How much you were my conqueror, and that
> My sword, made weak by my affection, would
> Obey it on all cause."

Cleopatra again asks pardon, and Antony, now quite won over to her, exclaims with passionate, doting fondness:

> "Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
> All that is won and lost. Give me a kiss;
> Even this repays me."

and then in reviving spirits calls out:

> "Some wine, within there, and our viands! Fortune knows
> We scorn her most when most she offers blows."

Octavius Cæsar, "the young man," is now advancing with his army against Antony, who sends him peace proposals in rather humble terms, only stipulating that he may be left undisturbed in Egypt or in Athens, while Cleopatra also sends to the young conqueror, owning his supremacy, and asking that her children, who are never introduced in the play, may succeed her in nominal authority in Egypt, but as Roman subjects. Octavius, however, now knowing that he is already almost master of the Egyptian situation, refuses all terms with Antony, while consenting to treat with Cleopatra provided she:

> "From Egypt drives her all-disgraced friend,
> Or take his life there."

He then sends his trusted follower, Thyreus, to Cleopatra, wishing to detach her from Antony, and gain

her over apparently at least to his side. Thyreus departs on his rather dangerous mission, and then Enobarbus, devoted to Antony, reproaches Cleopatra as the cause of his master's ruin. She asks, being now sure of her reconciliation with Antony:

"Is Antony or we in fault for this?"

Enobarbus replies with deep meaning:

"Antony only, that would make his will
Lord of his reason. What though you fled
From that great face of war,
. . . . . .
Why should he follow?
. . . . . .
'Twas a shame no less
Than was his loss, to course your flying flags,
And leave his navy gazing."

Cleopatra, knowing this to be true, only replies:

"Prithee, peace."

and Antony enters with his envoy, Euphronius, who has brought him Cæsar's haughty reply. The older triumvir roused to anger, and always remembering the comparative youth of his former colleague, says to Cleopatra:

"To the boy Cæsar send this grizzled head
And he will fill thy wishes to the brim
With principalities."

Cleopatra asks, as if shocked:

"That head, my lord?"

and he resumes:

"To him again. Tell him he wears the rose
Of youth upon him, from which the world should note
Something particular, his coins, ships, legions,
May be a coward's, whose ministers would prevail
Under the service of a child as soon
As i' the command of Cæsar; I dare him therefore
To lay his gay comparisons apart,
And answer me declined, sword against sword,
Ourselves alone. I'll write it; follow me."

Antony goes out with Euphronius, by whom he intends sending a challenge to personal combat with swords to Cæsar. When they are gone, Enobarbus, who well knows the characters, relative positions, and designs of the two

Roman leaders, exclaims to himself in sad sarcasm, pitying the now reckless Antony:

> "Yes, like enough, high-battled Cæsar will
> Unstate his happiness, and be staged to the show
> Against a sworder!
> . . . .
> That he should dream,
> Knowing all measures, the full Cæsar will
> Answer his emptiness! Cæsar, thou hast subdued
> His judgement too."

Enobarbus well knows that Cæsar, commanding almost the entire forces of Rome, and acknowledged there as supreme ruler, would never endanger his almost certain triumph in a personal encounter with an old skilled warrior like Antony, now distrusted, and abandoned by the majority of their fellow Romans. Enobarbus now thinks his master, Antony, almost out of his wits, under Cleopatra's influence, and hardly knows whether he should abandon him or not; as he adds still to himself:

> "Mine honesty and I begin to square.
> The loyalty well held to fools does make
> Our faith mere folly."

Thyreus, sent by Cæsar, now enters, wishing to see Cleopatra alone, but she bids him proceed at once, and he tells her that Cæsar knows she fears Antony more than loves him, to which she indicates assent by saying of Cæsar:

> "He is a god, and knows
> What is most right. Mine honour was not yielded,
> But conquer'd merely."

From this admission it seems likely that had Cleopatra deceived Octavius Cæsar, he would soon have replaced Antony in her favour, and Charmian again been in danger of "bloody teeth" had she ventured to praise the superseded Antony. Enobarbus, enraged at her treachery to his luckless chief, departs to acquaint him, and the artful Thyreus proceeds:

> "Shall I say to Cæsar
> What you require of him? for he partly begs
> To be desired to give.
> . . . .
> It would warm his spirits
> To hear from me you had left Antony."

Cleopatra, evidently preferring her own interests as far as she can understand them at this time, to all other considerations, replies humbly:

"Tell him, I am prompt
To lay my crown at 's feet, and there to kneel;
Tell him, from his all-obeying breath I hear
The doom of Egypt."

Thyreus replies:

"'Tis your noblest course."

and is kissing her hand, when Antony, accompanied by Enobarbus, enters in a perfect fury, savagely ordering the unlucky messenger, Thyreus, to be whipped. Enobarbus, comparing Cæsar and Antony, says to himself, as the attendants drag away Thyreus for punishment:

"'Tis better playing with a lion's whelp
Than with an old one dying."

Then Antony fiercely reproaches Cleopatra, but only in a fit of temporary passion:

"I found you as a morsel cold upon
Dead Cæsar's trencher; nay, you were a fragment
Of Cneius Pompey's;
. . . . . .
To let a fellow that will take rewards
. . . . . .
Be familiar with
My playfellow, your hand; this kingly seal
And plighter of high hearts."

He then sends back the beaten Thyreus with defiant words to Cæsar, and when he is gone, exclaims to Cleopatra:

"To flatter Cæsar would you mingle eyes
With one that ties his points,
. . . . . .
Cold-hearted toward me?"

Then Cleopatra, resuming her coaxing language, affectionately answers:

"Ah! dear, if I be so,
From my cold heart let heaven engender hail,
And poison it in the source."

After a few more protesting words Antony is again

won over to her, and regaining some of his former spirit, exclaims:

> "I am satisfied.
> Cæsar sits down in Alexandria, where
> I will oppose his fate.
> . . . . . .
> I will be treble-sinew'd, hearted, breathed,
> And fight maliciously;
> Now I'll set my teeth,
> And send to darkness all that stop me. Come,
> Let's have one other gaudy night: call to me
> All my sad captains; fill our bowls once more;
> Let's mock the midnight bell."

Cleopatra, whose only policy now is to encourage him, or, as some might say, "to fool him to the top of his bent," exclaims:

> "It is my birthday;
> I had thought to have held it poor; but since my lord
> Is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra."

and he rejoins, trying to rouse his spirits to the utmost:

> "Come on, my queen;
> There's sap in't yet. The next time I do fight
> I'll make death love me, for I will contend
> Even with his pestilent scythe."

He goes out with his enchantress, and Enobarbus, now despairing of enlightening Antony about Cleopatra's treachery, after his failure in exposing Thyreus, resolves to abandon his infatuated leader. Believing still that Antony's sudden resumption of courage is merely the effect of furious desperation, Enobarbus exclaims to himself:

> "Now he'll outstare the lightning.
> . . . . . .
> And I see still,
> A diminution in our captain's brain
> Restores his heart. When valour preys on reason
> It eats the sword it fights with. I will seek
> Some way to leave him."

In fact, Enobarbus perceives that in following Antony he is practically favouring the arts or interests of Cleopatra. He is evidently still agitated in mind at deserting his renowned leader, who, having done so much to promote the glory of Rome, is now condemned or distrusted by nearly

all Romans as an infatuated enemy of his country. The next act and first scene introduces Cæsar reading Antony's defiant letter to himself, and attended by Mecænas and Agrippa. Cæsar, at once scornful and indignant, exclaims:

"He calls me boy, and chides, as he had power
To beat me out of Egypt; my messenger
He hath whipp'd with rods; dares me to personal combat,
Cæsar to Antony. Let the old ruffian know
I have many other ways to die; meantime
Laugh at his challenge."

Mecænas advises Cæsar to hasten the impending battle:

"Give him no breath, but now
Make boot of his distraction; never anger
Made good guard for itself."

Cæsar agrees, ordering preparation for speedy encounter, and then as if recollection of former friendship and alliance flashed across his mind, exclaims:

"Poor Antony!"

In the next scene Antony receives Cæsar's refusal of his personal challenge, and, evidently disheartened about the approaching contest, yet trying to bear up, addresses some of his adherents before Cleopatra and Enobarbus. He utters foreboding words which surprise both, but especially Cleopatra. He exclaims, taking several in turn by the hand:

"Thou hast been rightly honest; so hast thou:
Thou and thou; and thou; you have served me well,
And kings have been your fellows."

Cleopatra asks Enobarbus what Antony means, and his old adherent replies:

"Tis one of those odd tricks which sorrow shoots
Out of the mind."

and Antony proceeds:

"Well, my good fellows, wait on me to-night;
Scant not my cups, and make as much of me
As when mine empire was your fellow too,
And suffered my command."

Again the anxious Cleopatra asks Enobarbus aside what his chief means, and he replies:

"To make his followers weep."

Antony proceeds in the same strain:

> "Tend me to-night;
> May be it is the period of your duty;
> Haply you shall not see me more; or if,
> A mangled shadow; perchance to-morrow
> You'll serve another master. I look on you
> As one that takes his leave."

Enobarbus entreats him to encourage rather than depress his followers, when Antony, trying to assume a light heart which he is far from feeling, exclaims:

> "My hearty friends,
> You take me in too dolorous a sense,
> . . . . . .
> Know, my hearts,
> I hope well of to-morrow; and will lead you
> Where rather I'll expect victorious life
> Than death and honour. Let's to supper, come,
> And drown consideration."

These words show Antony's confused if not desperate state of mind at this time. He is completely ruled by devotion to Cleopatra, and whenever he thinks of anything but her, sees nothing but ruin before him. When he next appears Cleopatra herself helps to arm him for the impending battle, and her skill in doing so the enamoured Antony praises at the expense of his devoted servant Eros. Cleopatra asks:

> "Is not this buckled well?"

and he answers:

> "Rarely, rarely:"
> . . . . . .
> Thou fumblest, Eros; and my queen's a squire
> More tight at this than thou; dispatch. O love!
> That thou couldst see my wars to-day,
> . . . . . .
> I'll leave thee
> Now, like a man of steel. Adieu."

He goes forth to the battle, and Cleopatra, becoming despondent as to its result, says to Charmian:

> "He goes forth gallantly. That he and Cæsar might
> Determine this great war in single fight!
> Then Antony,—but now—Well, on."

She well knows Cæsar would be no match for such an

able "sworder," as Enobarbus termed Antony, but she also knows that Cæsar's army, composed likely of the best Roman troops, is pretty sure of victory. In the next short scene, Antony hears from a soldier that Enobarbus has joined Cæsar. His desertion instead of enraging Antony, as might have been expected, only depresses the unfortunate general, whose conscience apparently often reproaches him for his unpatriotic conduct towards his own country. The doomed leader therefore mournfully exclaims to his attendant:

> "Go, Eros, send his treasure after; do it;
> Detain no jot, I charge thee. Write to him,
> I will subscribe, gentle adieus and greetings;
> Say that I wish he never find more cause
> To change a master. O! my fortunes have
> Corrupted honest men."

Antony well knows that Enobarbus, hitherto his most faithful follower, is also a true Roman in feeling, and would never have deserted him, had not Antony himself turned against the interests of the Roman empire. Whenever Antony is not under Cleopatra's influence, he sees and knows his real duties, but when he thinks of or sees her, all duty to Rome is gone from his mind. This Enobarbus knows, and Antony's conscience confirms it. The next scene introduces Cæsar with adherents, and also Enobarbus. The former exclaims, anticipating the result of the coming battle:

> "The time of universal peace is near;
> Prove this a prosperous day, the three-nook'd world
> Shall bear the olive freely."

In all this play there is no other sentence, for its length, so sublime and full of meaning. It shows the desire of the future Augustus that his vast Roman empire, in its three-nook'd divisions of Europe, Asia, and Africa, should, after so many terrible wars, enjoy the inestimable blessing of profound peace. The habit of terming the Roman dominion "the world" was apparently the usual custom of the proud Romans, thus the well-known record in the Bible that a decree came from this same Cæsar Augustus "that all the world should be taxed," conveys the same idea, yet

Greeks, Romans, and Jews well knew that Eastern Asia, Northern Europe, and Southern Africa, were quite independent of Roman power. Shakespeare, however, attributes this exaggerated expression to young Cæsar at perhaps the most important or trying moment of his eventful career. To a man of his philanthropic purposes and grand ideas the opposition of such selfish, cruel profligates as Antony and Cleopatra was merely a temporary obstacle to his enlightened views, destined, as he seems to anticipate, to rule the Roman empire during its noblest period of happiness and true glory. Meanwhile Enobarbus, still personally loving Antony, reproaches himself for desertion when the battle begins, at first rather in Antony's favour, and Cleopatra congratulates him on apparent success. Antony in this brief triumph shows his former savage spirit, exclaiming to his men:

> "To-morrow,
> Before the sun shall see us, we'll spill the blood
> That has to-day escaped. I thank you all."

He then presents his brave follower Scarus to Cleopatra, exclaiming in wild voluptuous excitement:

> "To this great fairy I'll commend thy acts,
> Make her thanks bless thee. O thou day o' the world!
> Chain mine arm'd neck; leap thou, attire and all,
> Through proof of harness to my heart."

Cleopatra replies:

> "Lord of lords!
> O infinite virtue! comest thou smiling from
> The world's great snare uncaught?"

He rejoins:

> "My nightingale,
> We have beat them to their beds.
> . . . . . .
> Give me thy hand:
> Through Alexandria make a jolly march;
> . . . . . .
> Had our great palace the capacity
> To camp this host, we all would sup together
> And drink carouses to the next day's fate."

The next scene introduces Enobarbus thinking himself alone at night, but observed and heard by some of Cæsar's

soldiers. This luckless man cannot forgive his own desertion from Antony. He now apparently dies of a broken heart, and exclaims to the moon:

"Be witness to me, O thou blessed moon,
When men revolted shall upon record
Bear hateful memory, poor Enobarbus did
Before thy face repent!
. . . . . .
O sovereign mistress of true melancholy,
The poisonous damp of night disponge upon me,
That life, a very rebel to my will,
May hang no longer on me;
. . . . . .
O Antony! O Antony!" [*Dies.*

Cæsar's soldiers find he is dead, though they first think him asleep. Antony's complete defeat now ensues, though not at length described, and again Antony lays the blame on Cleopatra with whom he is now more furious than before, as he suspects she wishes to be friends with Cæsar. He exclaims to Scarus before calling Eros:

"All is lost!
This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me;
. . . . . .
Has sold me to this novice,
Bid them all fly; be gone." [*Exit* Scarus.

"O sun! thy uprise shall I see no more;
Fortune and Antony part here;
. . . . . .
Betray'd I am.
O! this false soul of Egypt!"

He calls for Eros, but Cleopatra alone enters, and he drives her off, exclaiming:

"Vanish, or I shall give thee thy deserving,
And blemish Cæsar's triumph. Let him take thee,
And hoist thee up to the shouting plebeians;
Follow his chariot, like the greatest spot
Of all thy sex."

She departs, and he vainly calls on Eros, and exclaims in reckless rage:

"The witch shall die:
To the young Roman boy she hath sold me, and I fall
Under this plot; she dies for't."

He departs, still calling on Eros, and the next scene introduces Cleopatra with Charmian, Iras, and Mardian. She is now really afraid of Antony's fury, and again resolves to deceive and win him back by pretending death. She retires to a monument, and sends Mardian to Antony to acquaint him of her death. She exclaims with her usual artfulness:

> "Mardian, go tell him I have slain myself;
> Say that the last I spoke was '*Antony*,'
> And word it, prithee, piteously. Hence,
> Mardian, and bring me how he takes my death."

In the next scene Antony is with Eros, his chief remaining follower, and tells him he believes Cleopatra is secretly allied with Cæsar, exclaiming:

> "I made these wars for Egypt; and the queen,
> Whose heart I thought I had, for she had mine,
> . . . . .
> She, Eros, has
> Pack'd cards with Cæsar, and false-play'd my glory
> Unto an enemy's triumph.
> Nay, weep not, gentle Eros; there is left us
> Ourselves to end ourselves."

While thus indicating suicide as the last resource, like many other Romans when desperate, the eunuch Mardian enters, and Antony at sight of him exclaims in sudden rage:

> "O! thy vile lady;
> She has robb'd me of my sword."

But he gravely answers:

> "No, Antony;
> My mistress loved thee.
> . . . . .
> The last she spake
> Was '*Antony! most noble Antony!*'"

and he assures Antony of her death. The artifice again succeeds, and the broken-hearted warrior, once the glory of Rome, but now so changed, exclaims to Eros in final despair:

> "Unarm, Eros; the long day's task is done,
> And we must sleep."

He then disarms with the help of Eros, saying:

"Off, pluck off:
The seven-fold shield of Ajax cannot keep
The battery from my heart.
. . . . . .
Apace, Eros, apace.
No more a soldier; bruised pieces, go;
You have been nobly borne. From me awhile."

Eros departs and Antony, then alone, exclaims:

"I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and
Weep for my pardon."

After more lamentation he calls Eros, and like many other Roman heroes vainly urges his faithful follower to slay him, saying that otherwise they will both be dragged through the streets of Rome to grace Cæsar's triumph amid the insults of the mob. This idea drives Eros desperate, and while pretending to kill Antony he slays himself. Then Antony exclaims as his faithful adherent falls:

"Thrice nobler than myself!
Thou teachest me, O valiant Eros, what
I should, and I couldst not."

He falls on his sword fatally wounded, vainly entreating his attendant Dercetas and others to despatch him. They refuse, but Dercetas, apparently wishing to please Cæsar, exclaims:

"Thy death and fortunes bid thy followers fly.
This sword but shown to Cæsar, with this tidings,
Shall enter me with him."

Diomed, a servant of Cleopatra, now enters, saying the queen is not dead, but "lock'd in her monument." Antony causes himself to be carried to her, addressing these affecting words to his followers:

"Bear me, good friends, where Cleopatra bides;
'Tis the last service that I shall command you.
. . . . . .
Take me up;
I have led you oft; carry me now, good friends,
And have my thanks for all."

When drawn up into the monument, he warns Cleopatra, who is now grieving wildly over him, to trust

none about Cæsar except Proculeius, and entreats her not to sorrow for his death, exclaiming:

> "But please your thoughts
> In feeding them with those my former fortunes
> Wherein I lived, the greatest prince o' the world,
> The noblest; and do now not basely die,
> . . . . . .
> A Roman by a Roman
> Valiantly vanquish'd."

He dies, and Cleopatra exclaims:

> "The crown o' the earth doth melt.
> . . . . . .
> The soldier's pole is fall'n: young boys and girls
> Are level now with men;
> And there is nothing left remarkable
> Beneath the visiting moon."

then faints, but soon recovers, saying to Charmian and Iras:

> "Come away;
> This case of that huge spirit now is cold;
> Ah! women, women. Come; we have no friend
> But resolution, and the briefest end."

Although in her present excitement she seems to contemplate suicide, Cleopatra has not yet given up all hope of captivating Cæsar. In the next scene Cæsar hears from Dercetas of Antony's death. He and his distinguished Roman followers, Mecænas and Agrippa, cannot help alike lamenting their illustrious fellow-countryman's death despite their indignation at his recent conduct. Young Cæsar exclaims:

> "The death of Antony
> Is not a single doom; in the name lay
> A moiety of the world."

Dercetas presents Antony's sword and announces his suicide by it. Cæsar exclaims;

> "The gods rebuke me, but it is tidings
> To wash the eyes of kings."

while Agrippa and Mecænas in different words express a similar admiration for the noble Roman.

Mecænas:

> "His taints and honours
> Waged equal with him."

Agrippa:

"A rarer spirit never
Did steer humanity; but you gods will give us
Some faults to make us men. Cæsar is touch'd."

Mecænas, observing this, exclaims:

"When such a spacious mirror's set before him,
He needs must see himself."

Cæsar, with many recollections of his former great ally rushing on his mind, exclaims with natural sorrow:

"O Antony!
I have follow'd thee to this;
. . . . . .
I must perforce
Have shown to thee such a declining day
Or look on thine; we could not stall together
In the whole world. But yet let me lament,
. . . . . .
That thou my brother, my competitor
In top of all design, my mate in empire,
. . . . . .
That our stars,
Unreconcilable, should divide
Our equalness to this."

A messenger from Cleopatra now comes, saying she awaits from Cæsar

"Instruction,
That she preparedly may frame herself
To the way she's forced to."

Cæsar returns a favourable message, and commissions Proculeius to assure Cleopatra that no shame is intended towards her; yet owns to his followers, when Cleopatra's messenger is gone, his reasons for apparent favour.

"Lest, in her greatness, by some mortal stroke
She do defeat us; for her life in Rome
Would be eternal in our triumph."

These words prove that Octavius Cæsar, despite many noble qualities, thought it no shame to deceive a deceiver, and that like most, if not all, of his fellow Romans, he gloried in a public triumph, through the streets of the capital, where prisoners were exposed to the insults, though likely not to the violence of the populace. This odious practice, indulged in by nearly every Roman conqueror, had caused many suicides by vanquished foes to escape

public disgrace. In this conduct towards Cleopatra Cæsar shows a duplicity, as well as vindictive pride unworthy of him, at least in modern estimation, which throws a dark shade on his glory, though perhaps few if any of his fellow-countrymen would have thought so. Doubtless, the wrong done to his virtuous sister, as well as the alienation of Antony from Roman duty by the arts of Cleopatra, specially exasperated Cæsar, and probably all Rome against her. Cæsar in fact sees in Cleopatra the enemy of his sister and of his country combined, and it would have needed a religious faith enjoining higher morality than Paganism to have taught Cæsar the duty of forgiving such a foe. The Roman Paganism, despite its many noble principles, rarely if ever checked or in any way censured the national delight, as dear to Romans as bull fights are to this day in Christian Spain, of public triumph over captives. Even in English history till later years this odious custom was sometimes followed. Shakespeare describes a notable, disgraceful instance in Bolingbroke's, afterwards Henry IV.'s, triumph over his luckless cousin, Richard II., the latter being led captive through London streets, the mob cheering the conqueror and hooting at the conquered.[1] In the next scene Cleopatra at first after Antony's death seems to contemplate suicide, as she says to Charmain and Iras:

> "My desolation does begin to make
> A better life.
> . . .
> And it is great
> To do that thing that ends all other deeds,"

[1] "All tongues cried—'*God save thee, Bolingbroke,*'
You would have thought the very windows spoke,
So many greedy looks of young and old
Through casements darted their desiring eyes
Upon his visage.
Whilst he from one side to the other turning
Bare-headed, lower than his proud steed's neck
Bespoke them thus—
'I thank you, countrymen,'
Men's eyes did scowl on Richard, no man cried
'God save him,'
But dust was thrown upon his sacred head."
—*Richard II.*, Act V.

when Proculeius comes from Cæsar through whom she sends the request that she may retain Egypt for her son, a prince who, as before observed, is never introduced in this play. She also begs to see Cæsar, when his guards, ascending the monument, surround her, and she tries to stab herself, but is prevented by Proculeius, who tries to re-assure her in these words:

> "Do not abuse my master's bounty by
> The undoing of yourself; let the world see
> His nobleness well acted, which your death
> Will never let come forth."

Cleopatra then wildly declares that she will destroy herself rather than be led captive through Rome, exclaiming at last:

> "Rather make
> My country's high pyramids my gibbet,
> And hang me up in chains."

Proculeius, after again trying to re-assure her, departs, and Dolabella, Cæsar's other officer, enters; Cleopatra sees or guesses that she is now a prisoner, and in excited words praises Antony as if to relieve for the moment her distracted mind:

> "I dream'd there was an Emperor Antony:
> . . . . . .
> His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm
> Crested the world;
> . . . . .
> In his livery
> Walk'd crowns and crownets, realms and islands were
> As plates dropped from his pocket."

Dolabella feels, or pretends to feel, compassion for her, which perceiving, the captive queen asks a question, and receives an answer that decides her fate.

Cleopatra:

> "I thank you, sir.
> Know you what Cæsar means to do with me?"

Dolabella:

> "I am loth to tell you what I would you knew."

Cleopatra, guessing his meaning, asks:

"He'll lead me then in triumph?"

and he replies:

"Madam, he will; I know 't."

This answer Cleopatra well believes, and now Cæsar himself appears, to whom she kneels, while he says with apparent graciousness:

"Arise, you shall not kneel:
I pray you, rise; rise, Egypt."

and she replies, perhaps still thinking she may win him over:

"Sir, the gods
Will have it thus; my master and my lord
I must obey."

and he replies, still in a gracious manner:

"Take to you no hard thoughts;
The record of what injuries you did us,
Though written in our flesh, we shall remember
As things but done by chance."

Cleopatra, as if still trying to please or propitiate, replies:

"Sole sir o' the world,
I cannot project mine own cause so well
To make it clear; but do confess I have
Been laden with like frailties which before
Have often shamed our sex."

Cæsar cannot but see in her the successful rival of his sister, as the seducer of Antony. He indirectly warns her, therefore, not to commit suicide, which he apprehends, assuring her in guarded language of gentle treatment, but she is destined to more humiliation, when she presents him with an account of her money, plate, jewels, and valuables, and summons her steward, Seleucus, to declare that she withheld nothing. This man, either through rare honesty or dread of Cæsar, owns that she has reserved to herself "enough to purchase" what she has made known. This admission well-nigh confounds Cleopatra, while Cæsar either admires, or pretends to admire and excuse her

prudence. She then exclaims, still trying to deceive or propitiate him:

"O Cæsar! what a wounding shame is this,
That thou, vouchsafing here to visit me,
Doing the honour of thy lordliness
To one so meek, that mine own servant should
Parcel the sum of my disgraces by
Addition of his envy. Say, good Cæsar,
That I some lady trifles have reserved,
. . . . . .
And say,
Some nobler token I have kept apart
For Livia and Octavia, to induce
Their mediation; must I be unfolded
With one that I have bred?"

She then reproaches Seleucus, who withdraws, and Cæsar, whom Cleopatra can never deceive, despite her extraordinary arts, bids her a calm farewell, which likewise does not deceive her. In fact, they thoroughly understand one another's wishes and intentions. Yet a greater contrast could hardly be than that of the grave, calm, future "King of the world," anticipating a time when under his rule a vast empire should enjoy complete peace, and an artful, voluptuous, cruel woman, engrossed by selfish enjoyment, and with no idea beyond it, though endowed with rare talents and accomplishments alike devoted to the same end. Cæsar's last words to her are:

"And believe,
Cæsar's no merchant to make prize with you
Of things that merchants sold. Therefore be cheer'd
. . . . . .
Our care and pity is so much upon you,
That we remain your friend; and so, adieu."

Cleopatra helplessly exclaims:

"My master, and my lord!"

and he replies:

"Not so. Adieu,"

and leaves her. She, however, guesses his intention about the Roman triumph, and exclaims to her attendants:

"He words me, girls, he words me, that I should not
Be noble to myself."

Dolabella re-enters, and though faithful to Cæsar,

yet reveals to Cleopatra what he knows to be his master's future intentions in leading her a captive through Rome. Convinced of this design, Cleopatra dismisses him, and, addressing Charmian and Iras in passionate language, describes the public disgrace which she believes awaits them all in Rome. She exclaims:

> "Mechanic slaves
> With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers, shall
> Uplift us to the view; the quick comedians
> Extemporally will stage us, and present
> Our Alexandrian revels. Antony
> Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness."

She thus tempts them as well as herself to commit suicide to escape what she describes, and in strange excitement recalling happy days with Antony, and even expecting their renewal, bids Charmian:

> "Go fetch
> My best attires; I am again for Cydnus,
> To meet Mark Antony.
> . . . . .
> Bring our crown and all."

A country man bearing figs now craves admittance, and Cleopatra addresses him. This man is far more like an English peasant than an Oriental, and may have been sent for by Cleopatra to bring a deadly snake among the fruit, as she exclaims:

> "What poor an instrument
> May do a noble deed! he brings me liberty."

She then asks the man:

> "Hast thou the pretty worm of Nilus there,
> That kills and pains not?"

The clown, evidently a comic, or strange character, replies that he has the snake, and has known it kill many people. He says:

> "I heard of one of them no longer than yesterday; a very honest woman, but something given to lie, how she died of the biting of it. Truly, she makes a very good report o' the worm, but he that believes all that they say shall never be saved by half that they do. But this is most fallible, the worm's an odd worm."

He sets down the basket, which Cleopatra apparently retains containing figs and snakes, and he says:

"Give it nothing, I pray, for it is not worth the feeding."

Cleopatra:

"Will it eat me?"

and he replies:

"You must not think I am so simple, but I know the devil himself will not eat a woman; I know that a woman is a dish for the gods."

Cleopatra:

"Well, get thee gone; farewell."

and he replies:

"I wish you joy o' the worm,"

and departs. Cleopatra then, full of the idea that she will soon rejoin Antony, exclaims:

"Methinks I hear
Antony call; I see him rouse himself
To praise my noble act."

Iras, apparently first bitten by the snake, falls and dies, when Cleopatra exclaims:

"This proves me base:
If she first met the curled Antony,
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss
Which is my heaven to have."

She then applies two asps in succession to her breast. Charmian follows her example, and both perish apparently without any dread of the next world, but eagerly expecting a renewal of this world's happiness in it, and in the most voluptuous forms. There is really nothing truly pathetic in these tragic events, if calmly considered. Cleopatra's jealous dread of Iras dying first, lest Antony should take a fancy to her, is almost ludicrous, according to modern ideas. It shows, however, that instead of apprehending the wrath of heathen deities, she merely expects that the feelings and passions of this world will be renewed in another, and be indulged in with more safety. The Roman guards now rush in, and Cæsar

himself soon follows to behold the last of Cleopatra and her two ladies. At this moment Octavius Cæsar doubtless reveals his true feelings. Though endowed with many noble qualities, he is yet by birth and education a Pagan Roman, sharing, perhaps inevitably, the love of public triumph, which specially inspired the most if not all of his fellow-countrymen. As Mr Lecky observes:

"Historians rarely make sufficient allowance for the degree in which the judgments and dispositions even of the best men are coloured by the moral tone of the time, society, and profession in which they lived." [1]

Octavius exclaims at seeing the dead Cleopatra, in words revealing his baffled intentions:

> "Bravest at the last,
> She levell'd at our purposes, and being royal,
> Took her own way.
> . . . .
> High events as these
> Strike those that make them."

He then signifies his speedy return to Rome, where a most glorious reign is before the future Augustus. By the Egyptian war he has alike vindicated Roman authority by crushing Antony's practical revolt against it, and has avenged his sister's wrongs. Young Cæsar's great task now is to confirm, strengthen, and in every way improve and develop the noble empire now acknowledging him, and admirably he accomplished it. As he himself had hoped, the "three-nook'd world" of Roman dominion in Europe, Asia, and Africa was now fated to enjoy under him not only peace, but a period of real happiness and intellectual glory hitherto unequalled perhaps in the history of mankind. Bacon's opinion of Augustus, expressed in vigorous concise prose, much resembles the poetical description of him by Shakespeare, in the successive plays of *Julius Cæsar* and *Antony and Cleopatra.*

"If ever mortal had a great, serene, well-regulated mind, it was Augustus Cæsar. Augustus, sober and mindful of his mortality, seemed to have thoroughly weighed

[1] "Map of Life," chap. vi.

his ends and laid them down in admirable order. In his youth he affected power, in his middle age, dignity, in his decline of life, pleasure, and in his old age, fame and the good of posterity."[1]

His reign, called the Augustan Age, has ever been celebrated in subsequent history as combining the real happiness of subjected millions in different parts of the world, with the triumphs of art and literature in the Roman capital. At the court of Augustus, his wise minister Mecænas, and the gifted poets, Horace and Virgil, alike enlightened and improved their fellow-countrymen by their able administration and attractive talents. This illustrious ruler and his noble Roman contemporaries were fated to leave the changing scene of this world's transitory glory, still believing that singular, fantastic Faith, perhaps inevitably trusted during centuries of what is now called religious ignorance. Yet their Paganism certainly numbered among its votaries some of the highest intellects, whose genius and wisdom, bequeathed by art, literature, and legislation, remain the study and the admiration of the subsequent Christian world. As Gibbon observes:

"All the provinces of the empire were embellished by the same liberal spirit of public magnificence, and were filled with amphitheatres, theatres, temples, porticos, triumphal arches, baths and aqueducts, all variously conducive to the health, the devotion, and the pleasures of the meanest citizen."[2]

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[1] Bacon's "Historical Essays."

[2] "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chap. ii.

KING RICHARD III.

THOUGH Richard III. may have been vindicated by some historical writers, yet Shakespeare's sketch of this extraordinary prince represents him a bold and crafty villain from first to last.[1] In *Henry VI.* Shakespeare first describes Richard aiding his brother Edward IV. to obtain the crown, both by personal valour and earnest counsel. In the opening of this most exciting play, the York faction, of whom Richard of Gloucester was a foremost champion, is completely triumphant. The Court in London is enjoying every kind of festivity; the Lancastrian party, for a time at least, completely vanquished, and peace is restored in England. Yet the exulting triumph of the House of York is fated to be short-lived, and its fall is finally caused indirectly by the discontent of its brave champion, Gloucester himself. In all the London rejoicings and palace festivities, in honour of his own victorious family, Gloucester finds no enjoyment when once the eager excitement of warfare is over, in which his daring spirit keenly delighted. When contemplating his relatives and partisans, feasting, dancing, and enjoying themselves around him in the gay palaces of London, this prince disfigured, though evidently not disabled by personal deformity, is yet unable or unwilling to take part in the surrounding enjoyments, and gradually resolves to turn against his own family, and seize upon the crown himself. This daring idea he had vaguely indicated at intervals during the civil war de-

[1] Hume admits that this king has "met with partisans among the later writers" ("History of England," vol. iii.), but he and Shakespeare seem to take much the same view of him.

scribed in *Henry VI.*, but had kept this design a secret while combating with such bravery for the York party, that none among them had the least suspicion of it. His elder brothers, King Edward IV. and George, Duke of Clarence, trust him completely, and his plans are alone revealed in soliloquy. During the actual civil war he has no confidant, and trusts nobody. His first revelations are in the last part of *Henry VI.*, during the war and fully explain his future designs in the anticipated triumph of his faction. Even at this time of doubt, danger, and excitement, he longs to obtain the crown with all the determined force and energy of his enterprising nature. He exclaims, when of course none hear him:

> "Between my soul's desire and me
> (The lustful Edward's title buried)
> Is Clarence, Henry, and his young son Edward."

The thoughts of these living obstacles to his ambition then seem to somewhat perplex or depress him, but his indomitable spirit soon prevails, and he continues:

> "Why then I do but dream on sovereignty
> Like one that stands upon a promontory
> And spies a far-off shore where he would tread,
> Wishing his foot were equal with his eye
> And chides the sea that sunders him from thence.
> . . . . . .
> My eye's too quick, my heart o'er weens too much,
> Unless my hand and strength could equal them
> Well say there is no kingdom then for Richard
> What other pleasure can the world afford?
> I'll make my heaven in a lady's lap
> And deck my body in gay ornaments
> And witch sweet ladies with my words and looks."

Then, as if suddenly remembering and exaggerating his deformity, he exclaims:

> "O miserable thought! and more unlikely
> Than to accomplish twenty golden crowns
> Why love foreswore me in my mother's womb
> And for I should not deal in her soft laws
> She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe
> To shrink mine arm up like a withered shrub

To make an envious mountain on my back
Where sits deformity to mock my body
. . . . . .
And am I then a man to be belov'd?
O monstrous fault, to harbour such a thought!
Then since this earth affords no joy to me
But to command, to check, to o'erbear such
As are of better person than myself
I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown."

This thought he again intimates, after slaying the captive King Henry VI., when he avows no real friendship for relatives or any political party, though he had hitherto fought for his brother, Edward IV., who thoroughly trusts and confides in him. He exclaims:

"I have no brother, I am like no brother,
And this word *love* which greybeards call divine
Be resident in men like another
And not in me, I am myself alone."

After the civil war and the complete defeat of the Lancastrians, jealousies arose between the victorious brothers of the House of York. The unfortunate Duke of Clarence was imprisoned by his reigning brother Edward IV., at the secret instigation of Richard, who at the opening of the play bearing his name, again reveals his thoughts and plans as before, but now in a more triumphant tone, owing to the success of his faction. Although apparently sharing in the general exultation of the York party, Richard is soon inspired with envious discontent at beholding his brother's success, and exclaims to himself during the general rejoicings in London:

"Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
. . . . . .
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings;
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures."

After thus comparing the present triumph with the various hardships endured to obtain it, Richard again alludes to his deformity, never absent from his mind, as always preventing his enjoyment, at first with sorrowful

regret, but he gradually works himself up to own his ambitious designs and murderous plots:

"But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
. . . . . .
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world,
. . . . . .
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to see my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity;
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain,
And hate the idle pleasures of these days."

He then reverts to practical plots and conspiracies, his energetic mind divided as it were between dangerous ambition and personal disappointment. He proceeds:

"Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the king
In deadly hate the one against the other:
. . . . . .
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up,
About a prophecy, which say that G
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.
Dive, thoughts, down to my soul: here Clarence comes."

His unlucky brother Clarence now enters as a state prisoner guarded, and on his way to the terrible Tower. Gloucester pretends to be friendly, and Clarence, like nearly every one else at present, fully believes him. King Edward has, in fact, imprisoned Clarence, suspecting treason, and partly, as the latter knows, because his name is George, which confirms a strange prophecy about the letter G commencing the name of his fatal enemy. This idea was really true, Richard of Gloucester being really the enemy indicated, but never suspected, for the king in fact distrusts his loyal brother and believes the false one, with an ignorance of their relative characters

which would seem impossible if it were not confirmed by history. Gloucester, pretending to pity Clarence, asks why he is a prisoner, Clarence replies because his name is George, and the other exclaims with apparent surprise and sympathy:

> "Alack! my lord, that fault is none of yours;
> He should, for that, commit your godfathers,"

and then tells Clarence, who is ignorant of all the plots around him, that the present queen, Elizabeth, their sister-in-law, her relations, and a certain Jane Shore, a favourite of the king, are the real foes both of Clarence and of himself. The former, thoroughly trusting Richard, believes him when he says:

> "Well, your imprisonment shall not be long;
> I will deliver you, or else lie for you.
> Meantime have patience."

Clarence is then taken to the Tower, while Gloucester reveals to himself his plot against him:

> "Go tread the path that thou shalt ne'er return,
> Simple, plain Clarence!"

The ease and success with which Gloucester deceives every one for a long time, even those who knew him from infancy, is really astonishing, and would seem impossible, were it not supported by some though not by all historians. In this play Gloucester's frequent soliloquies alone reveal his true mind. In few if any of Shakespeare's plays are soliloquies so long or so frequent as in this and in the third part of *Henry VI.*, where Gloucester first takes active part, though introduced in the second. This Prince, as he admits, was indeed "himself alone" in secret design, though finally he has to partly trust adherents whom he uses, and destroys with wonderful impunity. After Clarence is gone to the Tower, Gloucester receives Lord Hastings, a man devoted to the three royal brothers, who announces the king's illness, and when he departs, Richard exclaims to himself, revealing

his plots and designs against both his brothers, whom he has set against one another, but who alike trust him:

"He cannot live, I hope; and must not die
Till George be pack'd with post-horse up to heaven.
I'll in, to urge his hatred more to Clarence,
With lies well steel'd with weighty arguments;
And, if I fail not in my deep intent,
Clarence hath not another day to live:
Which done, God take King Edward to His mercy,
And leave the world for me to bustle in!
. . . . . .
But yet I run before my horse to market:
Clarence still breathes; Edward still lives and reigns:
When they are gone, then must I count my gains."

The high almost boisterous spirits of Richard when excited never diminish his craft or make him unguarded. The civil war being now quite over, he is amidst his triumphant partisans admired and respected for his bravery, royal birth, and past services, yet becomes a more dangerous foe than any they had previously encountered. He is at present "himself alone" looking out for ready, unscrupulous adherents, but attached to none, and nearly all around soon become his mere instruments, or his mortal enemies. In the next scene he meets the Lady Anne accompanying the funeral of the late king, Henry VI., her father-in-law, killed when a prisoner by Richard of Gloucester; she mourns over the unfortunate monarch, slain in so base a manner, exclaiming to those around her:

"Set down, set down your honourable load,
Whilst I awhile obsequiously lament
The untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster.
. . . . . .
Thou bloodless remnant of that royal blood!
Be it lawful that I invocate thy ghost,
To hear the lamentations of poor Anne,
Wife to thy Edward, to thy slaughter'd son,
Lo! in these windows that let forth thy life,
I pour the helpless balm of my poor eyes."

She then bitterly denounces Richard, as the late king's murderer, though without seeing him, and then addressing the attendants, says:

"Come, now towards Chertsey with your holy load,
Taken from Paul's to be interred there."

Richard now appears, and orders the procession to stop. The attendants obey, being afraid alike of his power and his violence, while Anne, irritated as well as surprised at the unexpected appearance of the chief cause of all her present misery, exclaims:

> "What black magician conjures up this fiend,
> To stop devoted charitable deeds?"

All her attendant bearers obey him, and the procession stops, while Richard at once changing his tone from stern command to pretended sympathy, addresses Lady Anne, whose weak vanity he doubtless well knew how to deal with. After a "keen encounter of wits," during which she vehemently reproaches him for his crimes, Richard with consummate art meekly asks:

> "Is not the causer of the timeless deaths
> Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,
> As blameful as the executioner?"

Anne replies indignant:

> "Thou art the cause, and most accursed effect."

And he gently answers:

> "Your beauty was the cause of that effect;
> Your beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep
> To undertake the death of all the world,
> So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom."

Anne, in her passionate answer, cannot quite conceal her vanity, which does not escape her tempter's observation:

> "If I thought that, I tell thee, homicide,
> These nails should rend that beauty from my cheeks."

He at once catching at her words, exclaims:

> "These eyes could not endure that beauty's wreck;
> You should not blemish it if I stood by;
> As all the world is cheered by the sun,
> So I by that; it is my day, my life."

Anne:

> "Out of my sight! thou dost infect mine eyes."

Richard, again catching at her words, replies:

> "Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine."

Anne, still furious with him, exclaims:

"Would they were basilisks, to strike thee dead!"

Even these raging words Richard turns to his own purposes, replying:

"I would they were, that I might die at once;
For now they kill me with a living death.
I never sued to friend nor enemy;
My tongue could never learn sweet soothing words;
But now thy beauty is proposed my fee,
My proud heart sues, and prompts my tongue to speak."

Anne then looks scornfully at him, makes no immediate reply, and he continues, as if feeling his way more and more how to deceive her:

"Teach not thy lip such scorn, for it was made
For kissing, lady, not for such contempt."

Then evidently guessing her perplexed state of mind, and knowing he has nothing to fear from her weak vacillating nature, he exclaims, as if driven to the last extremity of humble entreaty:

"If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive
Lo! here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword;
Which if thou please to hide in this true breast
And let the soul forth that adoreth thee,
I lay it naked to thy deadly stroke,
And humbly beg the death upon my knee."

He gives her the sword, which she takes, and he reminds her that he slew both her husband and father-in-law, exclaiming:

("But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.")

At these words she lets fall the sword, while he, still kneeling, exclaims:

"Take up the sword again, or take up me."

To this entreaty, angry, yet hesitating, she replies:

"Arise, dissembler: though I wish thy death,
I will not be thy executioner."

This scene in minute details could hardly have really happened, though history shows how well it illustrates

the characters of Richard and Lady Anne. He puts her vain folly to a yet further test, exclaiming:

"Then bid me kill myself, and I will do it."

And she replies:

"I have already."

This answer might seem embarrassing, but not to Richard observing her closely, and well understanding her weak character, as he calmly rejoins:

"That was in thy rage:
Speak it again, and even with the word,
This hand, which for thy love, did kill thy love,
Shall for thy love, kill a far truer love:
To both their deaths shalt thou be accessory."

Then follows a quick exchange of short sentences, admirably fitted for the stage in which the triumph of extraordinary artifice over personal vanity and weakness is described to perfection. Anne becoming really puzzled between the wonderful art of her tempter, and her knowledge of his past history, irresolutely exclaims:

"I would I knew thy heart."

He readily replies:

"'Tis figured in my tongue."

Still hesitating, she answers:

"I fear me both are false."

and he retorts:

"Then never man was true.'

Anne, still perplexed, yet apparently wishing to believe him, exclaims:

"Well, well, put up your sword."

and he asks:

"Say then, my peace is made."

Anne, still hesitating, replies:

"That shalt thou know hereafter."

Again he humbly asks:

"But shall I live in hope?"

To which she replies with rather more sense than before:

"All men, I hope, live so."

Encouraged by her softened words, Richard now exclaims:

"Vouchsafe to wear this ring."

Anne takes it, saying as if faintly pretending to be still suspicious:

"To take is not to give."

Richard, inwardly delighted, then exclaims with assumed grateful thanks:

"Look! how this ring encompasseth thy finger,
Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart;
Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.
And if thy poor devoted suppliant may
But beg one favour at thy gracious hand,
Thou dost confirm his happiness for ever."

Anne, more and more won over by a singular charm of manner, which Richard certainly possessed, and which deceived many other far stronger minds than hers, for a time graciously, if not favourably, asks:

"What is it?"

Richard, in assumed penitent entreaty, replies:

"That it may please you leave these sad designs
To him that hath more cause to be a mourner,
And presently repair to Crosby-place;
Where, after I have solemnly interr'd
At Chertsey monastery this noble king,
And wet his grave with my repentant tears,
I will with all expedient duty see you:
For divers unknown reasons I beseech you,
Grant me this boon."

Anne, now completely won over, and believing all he says, complacently replies:

"With all my heart; and much it joys me too
To see you are become so penitent."

He meekly exclaims:

"Bid me farewell."

while she, completely deceived, replies in a sort of good-humoured raillery:

> "'Tis more than you deserve;
> But since you teach me how to flatter you,
> Imagine I have said farewell already."

She departs with a few attendants, while Gloucester orders the funeral to proceed to White-Friars instead of Chertsey, and to attend his coming. When all are gone away, Richard in one of his many soliloquies gives full vent to his exultation, exclaiming with mingled triumph, amusement, and mockery:

> "Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
> Was ever woman in this humour won?
> . . . . . .
> What! I, that kill'd her husband and his father,
> To take her in her heart's extremest hate;
> With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
> And I no friends to back my suit withal,
> But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
> And yet to win her, all the world to nothing!
> Ha!
> Hath she forgot already that brave prince,
> Edward, her lord, whom I, some three months since,
> Stabb'd in my angry mood, at Tewksbury?
> A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,
> Framed in the prodigality of nature,
> Young, valiant, wise, and no doubt, right royal,
> The spacious world cannot again afford:
> And will she yet abase her eyes on me,
> That cropp'd the golden prime of this sweet prince,
> . . . . . .
> On me, that halt and am misshapen thus?
> I do mistake my person all this while:
> Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,
> Myself to be a marvellous proper man."

Having once got this idea, or trying to impose upon himself, he proceeds:

> "I'll be at charges for a looking-glass
> And entertain a score or two of tailors,
> To study fashions to adorn my body:
> . . . . . .
> But first I'll turn yon fellow in his grave,
> And then return lamenting to my love,
> Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass,
> That I may see my shadow as I pass."

In this play as in Part III. of *Henry VI.*, Richard

constantly refers to his deformity. Shakespeare evidently believes him completely absorbed and influenced by its recollection, and in this soliloquy his eager exultation at deceiving the Lady Anne, though almost grotesque in its vehemence, is consistent enough with the poet's description of him throughout. Richard hitherto had encountered none who seem to quite understand him. His brothers, Edward IV. and Clarence, though knowing him all his life, are as much mistaken in him as any one else, but this confidence may be well attributed to his proved courage and devotion to the York faction, during the late civil war, which has terminated not long before this play begins. Richard's real character becomes known gradually, by slow degrees, and his powers of deceit would seem exaggerated beyond possibility, were not their success, though brief, confirmed by historical evidence. The next scene after his triumph over the poor, weak Lady Anne's vain mind, introduces the queen, Elizabeth, with her brother, Lord Rivers, and her son, Lord Grey, by a former marriage. The three naturally lament the king's dangerous and mysterious illness, which was by some attributed to poison administered to him by Richard. Yet this idea, though not very improbable, seems never to have been actually proved. The alarmed queen, suspecting Richard to be her enemy, and not knowing how to oppose his machinations, grieves prophetically over the king's illness, exclaiming:

"If he were dead, what would betide on me?"

Her son, trying to console, replies:

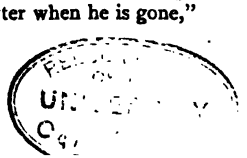
"No other harm but loss of such a lord."

to which remark she makes a short but most pathetic reply, expressing in Shakespeare's best style so much truth and feeling in a few words:

"The loss of such a lord includes all harm."

Her son, Lord Grey, reminds her of his younger half-brother, heir to the Crown:

"The heavens have blessed you with a goodly son,
To be your comforter when he is gone,"



and she apprehensively answers:

> "Ah! he is young; and his minority
> Is put into the trust of Richard Gloucester,
> A man that loves not me, nor none of you,"

and adds that if the king dies, Gloucester will be the Protector of England, owing to her son's minority and the imprisonment of Clarence. The Duke of Buckingham and Lord Stanley enter, the former an influential nobleman devoted to Richard, and apparently anxious to reconcile the queen and him. Stanley and Buckingham have just left the king's chamber, and the latter tells the queen that King Edward is anxious to make peace between Richard and her relatives, and for that purpose desires them all to come before him. Richard now enters with the queen's son Dorset, and Lord Hastings, the latter an ambitious courtier, under Richard's influence to some extent, yet faithful to the king. Richard, assuming an air of injured innocence, accuses the queen, her friends and relatives, of setting the king against him, exclaiming, as if he were an honest and plain-spoken man, surrounded by cunning plotters:

> "Who are they that complain unto the king,
> That I, forsooth, am stern and love them not?
> By holy Paul, they love his grace but lightly
> That fill his ears with such dissentious rumours.
> Because I cannot flatter and speak fair,
> Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog,
> Duck with French nods and apish courtesy,
> I must be held a rancorous enemy,
> Cannot a plain man live and think no harm,
> But thus his simple truth must be abused
> By silken, sly, insinuating Jacks?"

Young Grey, naturally indignant, yet afraid like all others of this dangerous prince, asks:

> "To whom in all this presence speaks your grace?"

But Richard fiercely retorts, addressing his opponents separately, and contemplating their embarrassment while still pretending to be ill-used:

> "To thee, that hast nor honesty nor grace,
> When have I injured thee? when done thee wrong?
> Or thee? or thee? or any of your faction?

A plague upon you all! His royal grace
. . . . . .
Cannot be quiet scarce a breathing-while,
But you must trouble him with lewd complaints."

The queen, his unlucky sister-in-law, partly frightened, yet trying to conciliate him, replies explaining why the king sent for them:

"Brother of Gloucester, you mistake the matter.
The king, of his own royal disposition,
. . . . . .
Aiming, belike, at your interior hatred,
That in your outward action shows itself
Against my kindred, brothers, and myself,
Makes him to send; that thereby he may gather
The ground of your ill-will, and so remove it."

Gloucester sarcastically answers:

"I cannot tell; the world is grown so bad
That wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch:
Since every Jack became a gentleman,
There's many a gentle person made a Jack."

This way of speaking provokes the queen, as Richard probably intended, and she warmly answers:

"Come, come, we know your meaning, brother Gloucester;
You envy my advancement and my friends,
God grant we never may have need of you!"

Gloucester, a regular proficient in the art of sharp retorts, artfully, throwing the blame of Clarence's disgrace on the queen's party, replies:

"Meantime, God grants that we have need of you:
Our brother is imprison'd by your means,
Myself disgraced, and the nobility
Held in contempt."

The queen, shocked and indignant at this accusation, exclaims:

"By Him that raised me to this careful height,
. . . . . .
I never did incense his majesty
Against the Duke of Clarence, but have been
An earnest advocate to plead for him."

Gloucester then accuses her of causing Lord Hastings' late imprisonment, when her brother, Lord Rivers, ventures

to speak for her, to whom Gloucester exclaims in a passion, real or pretended:

> "She may do more, sir, than denying that:
> She may help you to many fair preferments,
> And then deny her aiding hand therein."

His charges and reproaches at last rouse the queen into exclaiming with helpless anger:

> "My Lord of Gloucester, I have too long borne
> Your blunt upbraidings and your bitter scoffs;
> By heaven, I will acquaint his majesty
> Of those gross taunts that oft I have endured,
> . . . . . .
> Small joy have I in being England's queen."

At this moment Queen Margaret of Anjou, widow of the late Henry VI., enters, and in her appearance at this time in the palace of her triumphant though now divided foes, Shakespeare surely abandons historic truth for the sake of stage effect. In reality Margaret was imprisoned in the Tower of London till ransomed by the King of France, where she returned on her liberation, and never again came to England. In the play, however, she is made to join this family party, and to denounce them all but more especially Richard of Gloucester, whom she understands better than any one else present does, and warns Buckingham, his chief adherent, against him. Her violent reproaches, however, against the whole assembled York faction rouse them from their private quarrels into anger against her, when she exclaims:

> "What! were you snarling all before I came,
> Ready to catch each other by the throat,
> And turn you all your hatred now on me?
> . . . . . .
> God, I pray Him,
> That none of you may live your natural age,
> But by some unlook'd accident cut off!"

After long and repulsive maledictions on her listening foes in whose power she is all the time, Margaret withdraws, as if quite free to go when and where she liked, and Lord Rivers naturally exclaims:

> "I muse why she's at liberty,"

but no explanation is given of a situation only existing

in Shakespeare's imagination. A certain Sir William Catesby now enters, saying that the invalid king is awaiting their attendance before him. This man, a lawyer, is in both history and the play the most consistently devoted of all Richard's adherents, but he now says nothing more after delivering the royal message, and all go out leaving Richard alone, who again reveals in safe, unheard soliloquy his present plots and plans, rather boasting of his extraordinary craft, but probably underrating his associates in calling them "simple gulls" as the future proved:

> "I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl.
> The secret mischiefs that I set abroach
> I lay unto the grievous charge of others.
> Clarence, whom I indeed have cast in darkness,
> I do beweep to many simple gulls;
> Namely, to Stanley, Hastings, Buckingham;
> And say it is the queen and her allies
> That stir the king against the duke my brother.
> Now they believe it; and withal whet me
> To be reveng'd on Rivers, Vaughan, Grey."

In these words he shows his hitherto apparent, though more apparent than real, mastery over the chief nobles about the English court at this period. They would seem for some time as mere puppets in his power, whose various passions, interests, and jealousies he is alternately using for his own purposes. At this time, when the king is dying, and his next brother Clarence imprisoned, Richard during the minority of his two nephews, the king's sons, is rapidly becoming the chief ruler in England, though without the kingly title. The extraordinary success of his machinations is chiefly explained by the utter subjugation of the Lancastrian faction, and the valiant services he had rendered to the York cause, which made him naturally trusted as well as admired by all the chief men of that party. He was therefore for a time never even suspected by the rejoicing York faction, which he is now beginning to divide into separate parties, to promote his own personal ambition. He has no very devoted confidant up to this time, but is generally believed and respected for his great abilities and proved valour. Though begin-

ning to be feared by a few, he is not really understood by any, except perhaps by some of the subdued Lancastrians, who are now alike too weak and too unpopular to be much credited. Richard after this last soliloquy receives two hired assassins, doubtless by appointment, to whom he gives a warrant for admission to the Tower, obtained apparently from the king. Richard urges these ruffians in terrible words not to heed Clarence if he speaks:

> "Be sudden in the execution,
> Withal obdurate, do not hear him plead;
> For Clarence is well-spoken, and perhaps
> May move your hearts to pity, if you mark him."

One of them answering for both, replies:

> "Tut, tut! my lord, we will not stand to prate;
> Talkers are no good doers: be assured
> We go to use our hands and not our tongues."

Richard believing both are alike, and gratified at the ready villainy of this wretch, grimly replies:

> "Your eyes drop millstones, when fools' eyes drop tears;
> I like you, lads; about your business straight;
> Go, go, dispatch."

This saying, that "talkers are no good doers," may sometimes be imputed to Shakespeare as if it was his own opinion, like his supposed censure of unmusical people in *The Merchant of Venice*. But the allusion to the unmusical persons is made by a sentimental young Italian lover, and this censure on the "talkers" is only made by an eager murderer longing for the promised reward of his intended crime. In reality, the love of talking and love of music appear in the most different characters. For instance, Cromwell and William III. were utter contrasts, in the wearisome, prolonged talking of the former, and the remarkable silence of the latter. It should perhaps be more carefully observed than is sometimes the case before opinions are ascribed to Shakespeare himself who and what are the personages to whom he imputes them. The next scene after Richard's murderous injunctions to his satellites, is in the Tower to which so many noble Englishmen were consigned. The imprisoned

Clarence is talking to Sir Robert Brakenbury, the Lieutenant of the Tower, and telling him of his strange dream, that he has awaked from. Clarence, though neither so false nor so cruel as Richard, has yet proved himself both to some extent during the late civil war of the Roses. He says he first dreamed of being drowned when on a voyage with his brother Richard.

> "Methought that Gloucester stumbled; and, in falling,
> Struck me, that thought to stay him, overboard,
> Into the tumbling billows of the main.
> . . . . . .
> What dreadful noise of water in mine ears!
> . . . . . .
> Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks;
> A thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;
> Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
> Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
> All scatter'd in the bottom of the sea."

Then in the next world he fancies he had met the reproachful ghosts of those he had slain or deceived. The first was that of Lord Warwick, his father-in-law, whom he had joined and deserted during the war, and then that of the noble young Prince Edward, son of Henry VI. and Margaret, whom Clarence and Richard had slain when a prisoner. With these fancies oppressing his distracted mind, Clarence exclaims to Brakenbury:

> "The first that there did greet my stranger soul,
> Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick;
> Who cried aloud, '*What scourge for perjury*
> *Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?*'
> And so he vanish'd! then came wandering by
> A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
> . . . . . .
> And he shriek'd out aloud,
> '*Clarence is come; false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,*
> *That stabb'd me in the field by Tewksbury.*'"

Evidently during the excitement of civil war Clarence had been as relentless and unscrupulous as either his partisans or his opponents, though brave and generous at times. Historical students of most civil wars may reluctantly perceive how seldom its victims deserve the compassionate feelings of men living in more enlightened or peaceful times. Though humane novelists, like Sir

Walter Scott, may induce readers to pity or admire his imaginary victims of political or religious wars or persecutions, few in reality seem to merit such pity from a merely humanitarian standpoint. The rule has been during religious and political contests in England, as well as in all other lands, despite Christian teaching, to destroy opponents, for the sake of self-preservation, even when such opponents were helpless prisoners.

This relentless policy, as Shakespeare well knew, actuated both the English factions of York and Lancaster in the wars of the Roses. It was never a contest between cruelty and comparative humanity, but between two implacable factions belonging to the same Christian denomination, during which the precepts of their common faith enjoining mercy to fallen foes were openly violated by both parties without shame or hesitation. Neither party, in fact, expected to receive the least consideration or mercy from the other, and thus the victims could only regret they were not able to inflict what they themselves had to suffer. The conscience-struck Clarence in this scene apparently thinks more of the king's ingratitude to himself than of his own crimes, committed in his brother's interests, when he exclaims:

> "O Brakenbury! I have done those things
> That now bear evidence against my soul,
> For Edward's sake; and see how he requites me.
> . . . . . .
> I pray thee, gentle keeper, stay by me;
> My soul is heavy, and I fain would sleep."

Clarence then falls asleep, while Brakenbury is beside him, when the two assassins enter, showing Brakenbury a paper, and he exclaims, though full of distrust:

> "I am, in this, commanded to deliver
> The noble Duke of Clarence to your hands:
> I will not reason what is meant hereby,
> Because I will be guiltless of the meaning,
> There lies the duke asleep, and there the keys.
> I'll to the king; and signify to him
> That thus I have resign'd to you my charge."

The two ruffians know they are authorised by royal

warrant to slay the prisoner, and one of them scornfully says to Brakenbury:

"You may, sir; 'tis a point of wisdom,"

and the Lieutenant departs. The assassins, gazing at their sleeping victim, have a strange talk together, one begins to feel remorseful, as unwilling to commit the crime for which they are sent, while the other tries to harden him.

First murderer:

"What! art thou afraid?"

Second murderer:

"Not to kill him, having a warrant for it; but to be damned for killing him, from the which no warrant can defend us."

First murderer:

"I'll back to the Duke of Gloucester, and tell him so."

The second murderer, alarmed for his own safety at this threat, replies:

"I pray thee, stay a while."

He continues to hesitate, but his hardened accomplice stifles all reluctance by reminding him of the promised reward for their deed. As they are about to strike Clarence, he awakes, calling for wine, when startled at the sight of them, he asks who they are.

First murderer:

"A man, as you are."

Clarence replies:

"But not, as I am, royal."

The wretch retorts, knowing his victim's position:

"Nor you, as we are, loyal."

Clarence exclaims:

"Thy voice is thunder, but thy looks are humble."

to which the ruffian replies:

"My voice is now the king's, my looks mine own."

Clarence asks if they have come to slay him, which they admit, and he vainly expostulates, while they, pretending to be loyal subjects, charge him with treason

to the king in the late war, which was atoned for and pardoned owing to his subsequent devotion to Edward. They then rather inconsistently reproach Clarence for stabbing the young Prince of Lancaster, son of Henry VI., which certainly was a crime in the present king's behalf, to which the victim replies:

> "Alas! for whose sake did I that ill deed?
> For Edward, for my brother, for his sake:
> He sends you not to murder me for this;
> For in that sin he is as deep as I.
> . . . . . .
> If you do love my brother, hate not me;
> . . . . . .
> If you be hired for meed, go back again,
> And I will send you to my brother Gloucester,
> Who shall reward you better for my life
> Than Edward will for tidings of my death."

The murderer, knowing Richard better than Clarence does, replies:

> "You are deceived, your brother Gloucester hates you."

Clarence, unable to believe this, answers:

> "Oh, no! he loves me, and he holds me dear;
> Go you to him from me."

They grimly retort:

> "Ay, so we will."

and Clarence proceeds:

> "Tell him, when that our princely father York
> Bless'd his three sons with his victorious arm,
> And charged us from his soul to love each other
> He little thought of this divided friendship:
> Bid Gloucester think on this, and he will weep."

One of the assassins sarcastically retorts:

> "Ay, millstones; as he lesson'd us to weep.

Clarence, still trusting Gloucester, exclaims:

> "O! do not slander him, for he is kind."

and they with truth rejoin:

> "Right,
> As snow in harvest. Come, you deceive yourself:
> 'Tis he that sends us to destroy you here."

Clarence, still incredulous, exclaims:

"It cannot be; for he bewept my fortune,
And hugg'd me in his arms, and swore, with sobs,
That he would labour my delivery."

The most hardened of the ruffians scornfully replies:

"Why, so he doth, now he delivers you
From this earth's thraldom to the joys of heaven."

while the less hardened villain says:

"Make peace with God, for you must die, my lord."

and to him Clarence makes a pathetic appeal:

"Hast thou that holy feeling in thy soul,
To counsel me to make my peace with God,
And art thou yet to your own soul so blind,
That you will war with God by murdering me?
. . . . . .
My friend, I spy some pity in thy looks;
O! if thine eye be not a flatterer,
. . . . . .
Come thou on my side,
A begging prince what beggar pities not?"

The man thus addressed apparently remains passive or bewildered, while his savage comrade, more devoted to Gloucester, stabs Clarence to death, and then exclaims to the other:

"How now! what mean'st thou, that thou help'st me not?
By heaven, the duke shall know how slack thou art."

The other desperado, evidently shocked at the deed, departs exclaiming:

"I would he knew that I had saved his brother!
Take thou the fee, and tell him what I say;
For I repent me that the duke is slain."

The other wretch, utterly remorseless, exclaims:

"So do not I: go, coward as thou art.
. . . . . .
And when I have my meed, I will away;
For this will out, and here I must not stay."

He also departs, intending to hide the body of Clarence, and with this deed Act I. ends. Act II. introduces the invalid king, Edward IV., attended by his queen, her sons, Dorset and Grey, her brother, Lord

Rivers, and the noblemen, Buckingham and Hastings, with other courtiers in the palace. The king, knowing that many quarrels are increasing among his adherents, and foreseeing his fast approaching end, tries to reconcile them. The queen, despite their mutual attachment, cannot persuade him to distrust his brother, Richard of Gloucester, whom she fears and suspects. Edward now addresses his assembled adherents, hoping to make peace among them, with pathetic solemnity. He knows they have each been sharers of his recent triumph, all of them being Yorkists, and now with deep regret perceives hostility among them. He exclaims in solemn words:

> "You peers, continue this united league:
> . . . . . .
> And now in peace my soul shall part to heaven,
> Since I have set my friends at peace on earth.
> Rivers and Hastings, take each other's hand;
> Dissemble not your hatred, swear your love."

Rivers replies:

> "By heaven, my soul is purg'd from grudging hate;
> And with my hand I seal my true heart's love."

Hastings, in the same spirit, at least apparently, replies:

> "So thrive I, as I truly swear the like!"

The king, in words of warning, says:

> "Take heed you dally not before your king;
> Lest He that is the supreme King of kings
> Confound your hidden falsehood, and award
> Either of you to be the other's end."

Each again promises sincerity, while Edward addresses even the queen in like manner, knowing that she and her relatives are opposed to his brother Richard, who has completely deceived the king, though without alienating him from his wife or her relations. Edward says in sad reproof:

> "Madam, yourself are not exempt in this,
> Nor you, son Dorset, Buckingham, nor you;
> You have been factious one against the other.
> Wife, love Lord Hastings, let him kiss your hand;
> And what you do, do it unfeignedly."

The queen and all promise obedience to the king's

wishes, and the ambitious Buckingham says to the queen in prophetic words, considering his future career:

"Whenever Buckingham doth turn his hate
On you or yours, but with all duteous love
Doth cherish you and yours God punish me
With hate in those where I expect most love!
When I have most need to employ a friend,
And most assured that he is a friend
Deep, hollow, treacherous, and full of guile
Be he unto me! This do I beg of heaven,
When I am cold in zeal to you and yours."

These solemn words Buckingham utters perhaps with perfect sincerity at the time, but they seem to show that he is either a man of impulsive, weak character despite his ability, or that he is utterly deceived, like so many others, by the extraordinary artfulness of his future tempter, Richard of Gloucester. King Edward, deeply gratified at his language and in his weak state thoroughly believing him, exclaims:

"A pleasing cordial, princely Buckingham,
Is this thy vow unto my sickly heart.
There wanteth now our brother Gloucester here
To make the perfect period of this peace."

The old saying of "speak of the devil and he appears" is now almost verified, for Gloucester himself enters, and greets all around with the courteous persuasiveness which Shakespeare, the celebrated Sir Thomas More, and the historian Hume alike ascribe to him as being as formidable in times of peace as his valiant sword undoubtedly was in times of warfare. While contemplating the ruin or destruction of nearly all around him, Richard exclaims:

"Good morrow to my sovereign king and queen;
And, princely peers, a happy time of day!"

The king, who always trusts him, answers:

"Brother, we have done deeds of charity;
Made peace of enmity, fair love of hate,
Between these swelling wrong-incensed peers."

Richard replies:

"A blessed labour, my most sovereign liege,
Among this princely heap, if any here,
By false intelligence, or wrong surmise,
Hold me a foe;

If I unwittingly, or in my rage,
Have aught committed that is hardly borne
By any in this presence I desire
To reconcile me to his friendly peace:
'Tis death to me to be at enmity;
I hate it, and desire all good men's love."

Then addressing the queen, to whom he is far more polite in the king's presence than before, he says:

"First, madam, I entreat true peace of you,
Which I will purchase with my duteous service."

He severally addresses Buckingham, Rivers, and Grey in conciliating words, and concludes with consummate art:

"I do not know that Englishman alive
With whom my soul is any jot at odds
More than the infant that is born to-night;
I thank my God for my humility."

The queen, like the rest believing all now are at peace, asks the king to pardon the imprisoned Clarence, when Richard, the only one present who knows what has happened, exclaims with assumed indignation:

"Why, madam, have I offer'd love for this,
To be so flouted in this royal presence?
Who knows not that the gentle duke is dead?"

[*They all start.*

The king astounded asks:

"Who knows not he is dead! Who knows he is?"

The queen exclaims:

"All-seeing heaven, what a world is this!"

while the king proceeds:

"Is Clarence dead? the order was reversed."

Richard readily answers with all appearance of sympathy:

"But he, poor soul, by your first order died,
And that a winged Mercury did bear;
Some tardy cripple bore the countermand,
That came too lag to see him buried."

At this excited moment Lord Stanley enters eagerly asking the king to pardon a servant of his who had

just slain a riotous attendant on the Duke of Norfolk, perhaps in some brawl, but no detail is given. Edward, weak, excited, grieved, yet willing in his last moments to forgive any one, makes a speech in which his feelings, duties, and recollections are alike expressed with pathetic force:

"Have I a tongue to doom my brother's death,
And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave?
My brother slew no man, his fault was thought,
And yet his punishment was bitter death.
Who sued to me for him? who, in my wrath,
Kneel'd at my feet, and bade me be advised?
Who spoke of brotherhood? who spoke of love?
. . . . . .
Who told me in the field at Tewksbury,
When Oxford had me down, he rescued me
And said, '*Dear brother, live, and be a king!*'
Who told me, when we both lay in the field
Frozen almost to death, how he did lap me
Even in his garments; and did give himself,
All thin and naked, to the numb cold night?
All this from my remembrance brutish wrath
Sinfully pluck'd, and not a man of you
Had so much grace to put it in my mind."

Then, as if chiefly addressing Stanley, the broken-hearted king proceeds:

"But when your carters or your waiting-vassals
Have done a drunken slaughter, and defaced
The precious image of our dear Redeemer,
You straight are on your knees for pardon, pardon;
And I, unjustly too, must grant it you."

Then addressing all alike, the sad king concludes:

"But for my brother not a man would speak,
Nor I (ungracious) speak unto myself
For him, poor soul. The proudest of you all
Have been beholden to him in his life,
Yet none of you would once plead for his life.
O God! I fear Thy justice will take hold
On me and you and mine and yours for this.
Come, Hastings, help me to my closet. Ah! poor Clarence."

The king, queen, and attendants depart, leaving Richard alone with Buckingham, his earliest adherent of much importance. Richard, resolved to lay the blame of Clarence's death upon the queen and her relatives,

says to Buckingham, who trusts him, with prompt, plausible deceit:

> "This is the fruit of rashness. Mark'd you not
> How that the guilty kindred of the queen
> Look'd pale when they did hear of Clarence' death?
> O! they did urge it still unto the king:
> . . . . . .
> But come. Let's in
> To comfort Edward with our company."

This doubtful intended comfort is not mentioned as the king never appears again, and evidently does not long survive the shock of his brother's execution, announced in such a manner, and amid so much general excitement. The next scene introduces the old Duchess of York, mother of the king, Clarence, and Gloucester, with her little grandchildren, the son and daughter of Clarence. They ask if their father is dead, which she denies, yet apparently suspects he is, as the boy asks:

> "Why do you wring your hands, and beat your breast;
> And cry, '*O Clarence, my unhappy son!*'?"

and the girl asks likewise:

> "Why do you look on us, and shake your head,
> And call us *orphans, wretches, castaways*,
> If that our noble father be alive?"

She answers, as if giving up Clarence for lost:

> "You mistake me much;
> I do lament the sickness of the king,
> As loth to lose him, not your father's death;
> It were lost sorrow to wail one that's lost."

The son answers:

> "Then, grandam, you conclude that he is dead.
> The king mine uncle is to blame for this."

The old duchess, not wishing to tell them what she either knows or foresees, exclaims:

> "Peace, children, peace! the king doth love you well:
> Incapable and shallow innocents,
> You cannot guess who caused your father's death."

The boy readily replies:

"Grandam, we can; for my good uncle Gloucester
Told me, the king, provoked to it by the queen,
Devised impeachments to imprison him;
. . . . . .
Bade me rely on him as on my father,
And he would love me dearly as his child."

The duchess, knowing Gloucester's villainy, though perhaps not aware of this instance till lately, replies:

"Ah! that deceit should steal such gentle shape,
And with a virtuous vizard hide deep vice.
He is my son, ay, and therein my shame."

Her grandson now asks in evident wonder:

"Think you my uncle did dissemble, grandam?"

and she sadly answers:

"Ay, boy."

The lad naturally exclaims:

"I cannot think it,"

being obviously deceived by Gloucester's kindly manner to him, when the poor queen, now a widow, enters, distracted with grief and fear, accompanied by her brother Rivers and her son Dorset. They sincerely lament the king's death, who up to this time had been a constant check to Richard's ambition, and who despite some faults, was personally beloved by many. During their general lamentation, the arch-plotter Gloucester enters, attended by Buckingham, Stanley, Hastings, and Ratcliff, all at present devoted to him, though in different degrees, Ratcliff with Catesby being his adherents to the last. Though the duchess and her daughter-in-law, the widowed queen, dread and suspect Richard, they suppress their feelings, while he greets them with apparent friendship. He and Buckingham propose that the young prince or rather king, though not yet termed so, should be brought to London from Ludlow to be crowned. Richard consolingly addresses the queen, in pathetic words:

"Sister, have comfort; all of us have cause
To wail the dimming of our shining star;
But none can cure their harms by wailing them."

Then on his knee Gloucester salutes his mother, asking her blessing, to which the poor old lady replies with evident distrust:

> "God bless thee! and put meekness in thy mind,
> Love, charity, obedience, and true duty."

Richard, in the quiet sneering style with which he always addresses or speaks of his mother on the only two occasions they meet in this play, says:

> "Amen;"

and then to himself:

> "And make me die a good old man!
> That is the butt-end of a mother's blessing;
> I marvel why her grace did leave it out."

Buckingham, probably well instructed by Gloucester, says, but quite in the latter's style, addressing all around:

> "You cloudy princes and heart-sorrowing peers,
> . . . . . .
> Though we have spent our harvest of this king,
> We are to reap the harvest of his son.
> The broken rancour of your high-swoln hearts,
> But lately splinted, knit, and join'd together,
> Must gently be preserved, cherished, and kept:
> Me seemeth good, that, with some little train,
> Forthwith from Ludlow the young prince be fetch'd
> Hither to London, to be crown'd our king."

Rivers at first asks with well-founded suspicion why the prince is to have only "some little train" as an escort, but all yield to the friendly assurances of Gloucester and Buckingham, who remain together, after the rest have departed. Then Buckingham, most anxious to promote Richard's views, exclaims:

> "My lord, whoever journeys to the prince,
> Let not us two be behind;
> For by the way I'll sort occasion,
> As index to the story we late talk'd of,
> To part the queen's proud kindred from the prince."

Gloucester, pretending to have every confidence in Buckingham for the sake of encouraging him, replies:

> "My other self, my counsel's consistory,
> My oracle, my prophet! My dear cousin,
> I, as a child, will go by thy direction."

From Buckingham's allusion to a certain "index to the story" mentioned by Gloucester and himself, some plot against their political foes is evidently indicated, but the idea of assassinating the young princes, though doubtless often in Richard's mind, seems hitherto unknown to Buckingham. The next scene between three London citizens meeting in the streets shows the general apprehension in England at this dangerous time, especially in the capital. The third citizen asks the others whom he joins:

"Doth the news hold of good King Edward's death?"

First citizen:

"Ay, sir, it is too true; God help the while!"

Third citizen:

"Then, masters, look to see a troublous world."

First citizen:

"No, no; by God's good grace his son shall reign."

The third citizen gloomily rejoins:

"Woe to that land that's governed by a child!
. . . . . .
For emulation, who shall now be nearest,
Will touch us all too near, if God prevent not.
O! full of danger is the Duke of Gloucester;
And the queen's sons and brothers haught and proud."

First citizen:

"Come, come, we fear the worst; all will be well."

The third citizen, who seems to know more of his country's politics and political men, replies:

"When clouds appear, wise men put on their cloaks;
When great leaves fall, then winter is at hand;
When the sun sets, who doth not look for night?
Untimely storms make men expect a dearth.
All may be well; but, if God sort it so,
'Tis more than we deserve, or I expect."

The second citizen, also much alarmed at England's political future, exclaims:

"Truly, the souls of men are full of dread;
Ye cannot reason almost with a man
That looks not heavily and full of fear."

The third citizen, equally despondent at the news of the king's death and Gloucester's probable supremacy, replies:

"Before the times of change, still is it so.
By a divine instinct men's minds mistrust
Ensuing danger; as by proof we see
The water swell before a boist'rous storm.
But leave it all to God."

The next scene is in the palace, where the late king's mother, the Duchess of York, the widowed queen, her youngest son, the Duke of York, and the Archbishop of York are together. Little York, even at an early age, shows signs of rare intelligence, quickness, and ability. He already suspects and dislikes his uncle Gloucester, and with keen shrewdness remembers the latter's contemptuous words to him. He exclaims:

"Grandam, one night, as we did sit at supper,
My uncle Rivers talk'd how I did grow
More than my brother: '*Ay*,' quoth my uncle Gloucester,
'*Small herbs have grace, great weeds do grow apace*':
. . . . . .
Now, by my troth, if I had been remember'd,
I could have given my uncle's grace a flout,
That should have nearer touched his growth than he did mine.
. . . . . .
They say my uncle grew so fast
That he could gnaw a crust at two hours old;
'Twas full two years ere I could get a tooth.
Grandam, this would have been a biting jest."

His grandmother, apparently wishing this incident to be a secret, surprised at his wit and shrewdness, asks:

"I pray thee, pretty York, who told thee this?"

The boy, who probably was told it by his mother, the queen, answers:

"Grandam, his nurse."

but his grandmother contradicts him immediately, exclaiming:

"His nurse! why she was dead ere thou wast born,"

and the lad, perhaps afraid of telling who it was, replies:

"If 'twere not she, I cannot tell who told me."

His mother, wishing to silence him, now scolds him, saying:

"A parlous boy; go to, you are too shrewd."

She evidently accompanies this mild rebuke with a stern or displeased look, as the Archbishop interposes, saying:

"Good madam, be not angry with the child,"

to which she replies, evidently vexed at her boy's talkativeness:

"Pitchers have ears."

Dorset now enters, bringing the terrible news that his uncle and brother, Lords Rivers and Grey, with Sir Thomas Vaughan, are arrested and sent prisoners to Pomfret, by the orders and directions of the Dukes of Gloucester and Buckingham. The queen exclaims, terrified at this arrest of her relatives:

"Ay me! I see the ruin of my house.
The tiger now hath seiz'd the gentle hind;
Insulting tyranny begins to jet
Upon the innocent and aweless throne:
. . . . . .
I see, as in a map, the end of all."

The old duchess exclaims, recalling the stormy scenes of her past life, and comparing them with the present perils of her divided family:

"Accursed and unquiet wrangling days,
How many of you have mine eyes beheld!
My husband lost his life to get the crown,
And often up and down my sons were toss'd,
For me to joy and weep their gain and loss:
And being seated, and domestic broils
Clean over-blown, themselves, the conquerors,
Make war upon themselves; brother to brother,
. . . . . .
O! preposterous
And frantic outrage, end thy damned spleen;
Or let me die, to look on death no more."

The queen takes her boy to the sanctuary, and the duchess accompanies them by the advice of the Archbishop, who says:

"My gracious lady, go."

Then to the queen:

"And thither bear your treasure and your goods.
For my part, I'll resign unto your grace
The seal I keep: and so betide to me
As well I tender you and all of yours!
Come; I'll conduct you to the sanctuary."

They all depart, evidently alarmed at the danger which seems now coming upon England, for since the deaths of the king and Clarence, Richard of Gloucester, with his powerful and hitherto devoted ally Buckingham, are supreme in the kingdom. The next act and scene introduce the young Prince of Wales returning to London, accompanied by Gloucester, Buckingham, and Cardinal Bourchier, Archbishop of Canterbury. The prince never so lively as his younger brother, but grave and thoughtful, laments the absence of his two uncles, both by his father's and his mother's side, Clarence and Lord Rivers, the former now dead, and the latter imprisoned, sadly exclaiming:

"I want more uncles here to welcome me."

Gloucester, in the polished, persuasive language he can always command, though at times speaking with coarse brutality, thus addresses his doomed nephew, whose death he contemplates:

"Sweet prince, the untainted virtue of your years
Hath not yet div'd into the world's deceit:
. . . . . .
Those uncles which you want were dangerous;
Your grace attended to their sugar'd words,
But look'd not on the poison of their hearts:
God keep you from them, and from such false friends."

The prince, who like his little brother seems less deceived by Gloucester than many grown men are, distrustfully replies:

"God keep me from false friends! but they were none."

He is most anxious to see his mother and young brother, and, replying to the greeting of the Lord Mayor, says:

"I thank you, good my lord; and thank you all
I thought my mother and my brother York
Would long ere this have met us on the way:
Fie! what a slug is Hastings, that he comes not
To tell us whether they will come or no."

Hastings enters, saying that the queen and York have taken sanctuary, and that

> "The tender prince
> Would fain have come with me to meet your grace,
> But by his mother was perforce with-held."

Buckingham, completely Richard's tool for the present exclaims:

> "Fie! what an indirect and peevish course
> Is this of hers!"

and urges the Cardinal to return with Hastings and force the queen to give up her son to them. The Cardinal replies in firm protest:

> "My Lord of Buckingham, if my weak oratory
> Can from his mother win the Duke of York,
> Anon expect him here; but if she be obdurate
> To mild entreaties, God in heaven forbid
> We should infringe the holy privilege
> Of blessed sanctuary! not for all this land
> Would I be guilty of so deep a sin."

Buckingham, now thinking himself the most powerful man in the kingdom except Gloucester, whom he longs to serve, but whose real designs he does not yet quite understand, impatiently if not rudely rejoins:

> "You are too senseless-obstinate, my lord,
> Too ceremonious and traditional:
> . . . . . .
> You break not sanctuary in seizing him.
> The benefit thereof is always granted
> To those whose dealings have deserv'd the place,
> And those who have the wit to claim the place:
> This prince hath neither claim'd it nor deserv'd it
> . . . . . .
> Then taking him from thence that is not there,
> You break no privilege nor charter there.
> Oft have I heard of sanctuary men,
> But sanctuary children ne'er till now."

This crafty language from a man so distinguished and hitherto so respected as Buckingham prevails with the cardinal, who has little idea either of his or of Gloucester's designs, and he replies:

> "My lord, you shall o'er-rule my mind for once.
> Come on, Lord Hastings, will you go with me?"

and they depart accordingly, leaving Gloucester and the

prince together. The former proposes that the Prince should "repose" himself for a day or two in the Tower, which the latter dislikes, asking if Julius Cæsar built it, and being told he did, asks:

> "Is it upon record, or else reported
> Successively from age to age, he built it?"

and Buckingham replying that it was upon record, the prince thoughtfully proceeds:

> "But say, my lord, it were not register'd,
> Methinks the truth should live from age to age,
> As 'twere retail'd to all posterity,
> Even to the general all-ending day."

Buckingham makes no reply, but Richard says to himself, while keenly observing his nephew:

> ("So wise, so young, they say, do ne'er live long.")

The prince exclaims in beautiful allusion to that great ruler's celebrated "Commentaries," which he had evidently studied and appreciated:

> "That Julius Cæsar was a famous man;
> With what his valour did enrich his wit,
> His wit set down to make his valour live:
> Death makes no conquest of this conqueror,
> For now he lives in fame, though not in life."

Then full of hope and enterprise, he addresses Buckingham:

> "I'll tell you what, my cousin Buckingham,—
> An if I live until I be a man,
> I'll win our ancient right in France again,
> Or die a soldier, as I liv'd a king."

Again, in the same dangerous spirit, his uncle says to himself:

> "Short summers lightly have a forward spring."

Like a dark cloud obscuring a brilliant sunrise, this remorseless prince keenly perceives the early promise of great ability in his nephews, which practically makes him dread them all the more. His feelings towards them are

not unlike those of Macbeth when hearing of young Fleance's escape, and saying:

> "The worm that's fled
> Hath nature that in time will venom breed
> No teeth for the present,"

for young Edward is now fast approaching manhood, while his forward intelligent younger brother York gives every promise of being a courageous man. Richard therefore dreads their growing older or stronger, as every month of their promising young lives would certainly be an increasing obstacle to his ambitious designs against their royal rights. While Gloucester thus wonders at the young prince's early intelligence and clever remarks, the little Duke of York, accompanied by the Cardinal and Lord Hastings, comes from the place of refuge, the unfortunate queen being unable to detain him there longer. York immediately and naturally answers his brother, now lawfully the king, who asks him how he is:

> "Well, my dread lord; so must I call you now."

The other sadly replies:

> "Ay, brother, to our grief, as it is yours:
> Too late he died that might have kept that title,
> Which by his death hath lost much majesty."

Richard then greets little York, who answers him with rare intelligence. The boy reminds his uncle of his former words:

> "O! my lord,
> You said that idle weeds are fast in growth:
> The prince my brother hath outgrown me far."

Gloucester admits it, and York continues:

> "And therefore is he idle?"

Gloucester replies:

> "O! my fair cousin, I must not say so."

York answers:

> "Then he is more beholden to you than I."

Even the astute Gloucester is apparently rather puzzled

at the precocious sense and quickness of his nephew, and replies:

"He may command me as my sovereign;
But you have power in me as in a kinsman."

York then says:

"I pray you, uncle, give me this dagger."

Gloucester, apparently surprised, answers:

"My dagger, little cousin? with all my heart."

The elder prince, as if thinking York too forward, remonstrates, exclaiming:

"A beggar, brother?"

and York replies:

"Of my kind uncle, that I know will give;
And being but a toy, which is no grief to give."

Gloucester, assuming a ready good nature which never deceives York, says:

"A greater gift than that I'll give my cousin,"

and the boy, catching at his words, exclaims:

"A greater gift! O! that's the sword to it,"

and Gloucester replies:

"Ay, gentle cousin, were it light enough."

York retorts:

"O! then, I see, you'll part but with light gifts;
In weightier things you'll say a beggar nay."

Gloucester, apparently surprised at his forwardness, answers:

"It is too weighty for your grace to wear,"

and York replies:

"I weigh it lightly, were it heavier,"

and then Gloucester asks:

"What! would you have my weapon, little lord?"

The lad, nothing abashed, sharply replies:

"I would, that I might thank you as you call me."

Gloucester:

"How?"

York:

"Little."

This word, usually not pleasing to spirited boys, has apparently escaped Gloucester, who never thought it would be resented, when the elder prince, thinking the other too forward, interposes, saying:

"My Lord of York will still be cross in talk.
Uncle, your grace knows how to bear with him."

York, seizing upon these words, hazards a dangerous joke, apparently aimed at his uncle's deformity, and exclaims to both:

"You mean, to bear me, not to bear with me
Uncle, my brother mocks both you and me.
Because that I am little, like an ape,
He thinks that you should bear me on your shoulders."

Buckingham, who despite his devotion to Richard, cannot help admiring the cleverness of the little prince, here exclaims to himself:

"With what a sharp-provided wit he reasons!
To mitigate the scorn he gives his uncle,
He prettily and aptly taunts himself:
So cunning and so young is wonderful."

Gloucester makes no answer, but bent on his secret designs again proposes that the princes should go to the Tower for the present, saying that he will ask their mother to meet them there. York says he fears seeing his uncle Clarence's ghost there, while the elder brother, always serious if not melancholy, says with obvious meaning:

"I fear no uncles dead."

When Gloucester promptly exclaims:

"Nor none that live, I hope."

To these words the elder prince makes a sad foreboding reply:

"An if they live, I hope I need not fear.
But come, my lord; and with a heavy heart,
Thinking on them, go I unto the Tower."

All depart, leaving Richard and Buckingham, who now are beginning to hold many private conferences together.

Buckingham, much impressed with little York's cleverness, has evidently no idea of Richard's murderous designs against the princes, and perhaps looks forward to his patron ruling England during their imprisonment with himself as premier or chief counsellor. When alone with Gloucester Buckingham asks:

> "Think you, my lord, this little prating York
> Was not incensed by his subtle mother
> To taunt and scorn you thus opprobriously?"

Richard sharply answers with a brief sketch of what every boy might wish to be, though uttered in enmity:

> "No doubt, no doubt. O! 'tis a parlous boy;
> Bold, quick, ingenious, forward, capable:
> He's all the mother's, from the top to toe."

Buckingham, who compared to Richard seems now almost "the simple gull" the latter called him, unsuspiciously answers, evidently having no idea of what is in his companion's mind:

> "Well, let them rest,"

and then consults his fellow-plotter, Catesby, whom he calls, about inducing Lord Hastings to join them in the plan for making Gloucester ruler of England. Catesby, evidently an artful intriguer from first to last, craftily says of Hastings, knowing his love for the late king:

> "He for his father's sake so loves the prince,
> That he will not be won to aught against him."

Buckingham then asks:

> "What think'st thou then of Stanley? what will he."

The cunning Catesby, who seems to know more about the other courtiers than any one else, replies about Stanley:

> "He will do all in all as Hastings doth."

Gloucester and Buckingham then commission Catesby to "sound" Lord Hastings as to what he may be induced to do. Buckingham says to Catesby:

> "If thou dost find him tractable to us.
> Encourage him, and show him all our reasons:
> If he be leaden, icy-cold, unwilling,
> Be thou so too, and so break off your talk,
> And give us notice of his inclination."

Richard, infinitely more deceitful and persuasive than the ambitious Buckingham, adds:

> "Tell him, Catesby,
> His ancient knot of dangerous adversaries
> To-morrow are let blood at Pomfret-castle;
> And bid my friend, for joy of this good news,
> Give Mistress Shore one gentle kiss the more."

This Jane Shore, at present under the protection of Lord Hastings, had been mistress of the late king. According to history, she was often using her influence with the latter to accomplish acts of charity and benevolence, but she is not introduced in this play. Catesby, a cool, crafty lawyer, now shares the confidence of both Richard and Buckingham alike, and seems practically well worthy of it. By these two dangerous fiery men this artful subordinate is now thoroughly trusted, and apparently well knows how to serve their interests, believing doubtless they will reward him well in time. Buckingham exclaims:

> "Good Catesby, go, effect this business soundly,"

To which the other readily answers:

> "My good lords both, with all the heed I can."

He departs to tempt their present ally, but future victim, Hastings.[1] Catesby is throughout the most devoted and really energetic of Gloucester's adherents, yet he always occupies a subordinate position. Though one of the most unscrupulous of all Richard's instruments, the latter seldom takes private counsel with him, and seems always to use him more as a tool than as an important ally. When Catesby is gone, Buckingham, alone with Richard, asks:

> "Now, my lord, what shall we do if we perceive
> Lord Hastings will not yield to our complots?"

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[1] This unfortunate nobleman had a great regard for Catesby, according to Sir Thomas More, and was the more easily deceived by him. "Catesby was of his near secret counsel, and whom he very familiarly used, and in his most weighty matters put no man in so special trust; Catesby was a man well learned in the laws of this land."—More's "Life of Richard III."

Richard's reply is prompt, decisive, and terrible, perhaps too much so for his less savage associate:

"Chop off his head, man; somewhat we will do."

Then, as if to reconcile him to Hastings' death, Gloucester adds:

"And, look, when I am king, claim thou of me
The earldom of Hereford, and the moveables
Whereof the king my brother stood possess'd."

Buckingham, evidently delighted at this bribe, replies:

"I'll claim that promise at your grace's hand,"

and Richard rejoins with apparent graciousness:

"And look to have it yielded with all willingness."

It does not seem altogether clear what Buckingham really wished or contemplated at this dangerous period of England's history. He evidently desires to make Richard supreme, but has no idea of assassinating the two young princes. Yet he must have known that while either of them lived, Richard would have been a mere usurper, and as such in constant danger of his life, which in fact would be forfeited by the existing laws. At present, however, he never mentions the imprisoned and endangered princes, while actively aiding Richard's efforts to obtain the crown. The next scene introduces Lord Hastings at his own house, receiving a messenger from his friend, Lord Stanley, who, though for some time friendly to Gloucester, now begins to fear him, and urges Hastings by this messenger to escape with him from London to the north of England. He sends word that he has just dreamed that "the boar," the ensign of Richard, had "rased off his helm," and dreads these new divisions in the York party. Hastings, still trusting Richard, rejects Stanley's advice, even calling the artful Catesby his "good friend," and adds:

"Tell him his fears are shallow, wanting instance:
And for his dreams, I wonder he's so simple
To trust the mockery of unquiet slumbers.
To fly the boar before the boar pursues,
Were to incense the boar to follow us
And make pursuit where he did mean no chase.
Go, bid thy master rise and come to me;
And we will both together to the Tower.
Where, he shall see, the boar will use us kindly."

The messenger departs, and Catesby enters, well prepared to tempt the credulous and apparently not over-wise Hastings, who asks him almost confidentially:

"What news, what news, in this our tottering state?"

These words clear the ground for the sly Catesby, who promptly replies:

"It is a reeling world, indeed, my lord;
And I believe will never stand upright
Till Richard wear the garland of the realm."

At this idea Hastings is startled, and fires up like a loyal subject, and repeating the lawyer's words, exclaims:

"How! *wear the garland!* dost thou mean the crown?"

Catesby calmly answers:

"Ay, my good lord."

Hastings then with indignant astonishment exclaims, little suspecting the dangerous man now listening to all his words and prepared to report them:

"I'll have this crown of mine cut from my shoulders
Before I'll see the crown so foul misplaced."

Then thoroughly trusting Catesby, who has the confidence of many, he asks:

"But canst thou guess that he doth aim at it?"

Catesby, seeing he is becoming angry, thinks that the deaths of his foes may soothe, if not win him over, and replies:

"Ay, on my life; and hopes to find you forward
Upon his party, for the gain thereof;
And therefore he sends you this good news,
That this same very day your enemies,
The kindred of the queen, must die at Pomfret."

Hastings, relieved at this news, yet still scrupulous, replies:

"Indeed I am no mourner for that news,
Because they have been still my enemies;
But that I'll give my voice on Richard's side,
To bar my master's heirs in true descent,
God knows I will not do it, to the death."

Catesby, a worthy imitator of his patron Richard on a smaller scale, answers with assumed approval:

"God keep your lordship in that gracious mind!"

Hastings, who though loyal, is still sufficiently vindictive, perhaps not without some cause, considering this disturbed period, exclaims exultingly:

"But I shall laugh at this a twelvemonth hence,
That they which brought me in my master's hate,"

meaning that of the late king.

"I live to look upon their tragedy,"

and he says to Catesby, thinking they are both influential with Richard, and can safely punish all enemies or rivals:

"Well, Catesby, ere a fortnight make me older,
I'll send some packing that yet think not on't."

Catesby, well knowing all whom he is dealing with, now apparently diverts himself by mocking this unsuspecting victim, and observes with assumed solemnity:

"'Tis a vile thing to die, my gracious lord,
When men are unprepared and look not for it."

Hastings, completely deceived and confident, replies:

"O monstrous, monstrous! and so falls it out
With Rivers, Vaughan, Grey; and so 'twill do
With some men else, who think themselves as safe
As thou and I; who, as thou know'st, are dear
To princely Richard and to Buckingham."

Catesby, with consummate art, well knowing Hastings' imminent danger, as well as his own safety, quietly replies:

"The princes both make high account of you,"

then says aside:

"For they account his head upon the bridge."

Hastings confidently says:

"I know they do, and I have well deserved it."

Stanley now enters, still suspecting Gloucester, while Hastings tries to re-assure him, and partly succeeds in doing so. Hastings exclaims full of confidence:

"Think you but that I know our state secure
I would be so triumphant as I am."

Stanley prophetically mentions the queen's relatives now under sentence of death:

"The lords at Pomfret, when they rode from London,
Were jocund and supposed their state was sure;
. . . . . .
But yet you see how soon the day o'ercast.
This sudden stab of rancour I misdoubt:
Pray God, I say, I prove a needless coward
But come, my lord, what shall we to the Tower?"

Hastings replies:

"I go, but stay, hear you not the news?
This day those men you talk of are beheaded."

Stanley, though friendly with Hastings, does not apparently share his enmity, or not to the same extent, against the queen's relations, for he exclaims:

"They, for their truth, might better wear their heads
Than some that have accused them wear their hats."

He and Catesby go before Hastings, who remains behind. Shakespeare describes at peculiar length how this luckless nobleman was utterly deceived by Richard, owing to the latter's pretending to befriend him. Hastings, rejoicing at the executions of his political foes at Richard's instigation, now tells a priest who calls on him to come to him the next Sabbath. He previously meets a pursuivant, a former friend, to whom he says exultingly:

"'Tis better with me now
Than when I met thee last where now we meet:
Then was I going prisoner to the Tower,
By the suggestion of the queen's allies;
But now, I tell thee (keep it to thyself)
This day those enemies are put to death,
And I in better state than e'er I was."

Buckingham, having seen the priest, then enters, saying sarcastically:

"What! talking with a priest, lord chamberlain?
Your friends at Pomfret they do need the priest:
Your honour hath no shriving work in hand."

Hastings exclaims:

"Good faith, and when I met this holy man,
Those men you talk of came into my mind.
What! go you toward the Tower, my Lord?"

Buckingham:

"I do, but long, lord, I shall not stay:
I shall return before your lordship thence."

Hastings answers:

"'Tis like enough, for I stay dinner there."

Buckingham, already knowing or guessing his refusal to join in Gloucester's plot, says aside:

"And supper too, although thou know'st it not."

They depart together, and the next scene is short, describing Lord Rivers, the queen's brother, Lord Grey, and Sir Thomas Vaughan, led to execution by a guard under Sir Richard Ratcliff, a man like Catesby, devoted to Richard, and who always remained so.[1] This man, with Catesby and Lovel, who appears later on, for some time formed the terrible trio described in the well-known lines in which Richard is the boar or hog:

"The cat, the rat, and Lovel the dog
Rule all England under the hog,"

and the Boar's rule is certainly now fast approaching. His three victims, Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey, bewail their fate, praying that the young king may not yet be a victim also, knowing that he is now surrounded by foes, who wish to deprive him of all power if not of life. These three so-called traitors seem never to have been convicted of any capital offence, but are executed by the prevailing faction as their dangerous enemies. They recall the prophetic words of Queen Margaret, when warning them and others against Richard of Gloucester, who they know is the most powerful man in England; yet hitherto this extraordinary prince pursues his bloodthirsty course successfully by removing one obstacle after another to his accession to power. It would seem that Buckingham as well as Hastings and others, while aiding Richard in destroying

[1] Sir Thomas More's description of this man quite agrees with Shakespeare's. "A man that had been long secret with him (Richard), having experience of the world and a shrewd wit, short and rude in speech, bold in mischief, as far from pity as from all fear of God."—"History of Richard III."

their personal enemies, still think his ambition may stop short of absolute power, and that the more authority he has, the more advantage they will reap from it. Of the two, Hastings is more scrupulous than Buckingham, though for a time their objects seem much the same. But Richard, one of the most consummate dissemblers of his time, and in a royal position, well knows there can be no complete supremacy for him, until all rivals for the throne as well as their loyal adherents are removed by death from his path. The success, however, with which he contrives to destroy so many influential opponents, some of them even who were generally respected, would seem incredible were not the chief facts in this eventful play confirmed by historians. Rivers, the queen's brother, just before his execution, pathetically exclaims:

> "Sir Richard Ratcliff, let me tell thee this:
> To-day shalt thou behold a subject die
> For truth, for duty, and for loyalty."

Grey, the queen's son, exclaims in the same spirit:

> "God keep the prince from all the pack of you;"

and Rivers exclaims:

> "And for my sister and her princely sons,
> Be satisfied, dear God, with our true blood.
> Which, as Thou know'st, unjustly must be spilt."

Ratcliff, the eager instrument of Richard, "short and rude in speech," then exclaims:

> "Dispatch; the limit of your lives is out,"

and presides over their fate. After the executions, without any national protest, of Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey, who were always opponents of Richard since the final defeat of the Lancastrians, the destruction of his scrupulous ally, the Lord Chamberlain Hastings, is his next object This man, though aiding Gloucester against the luckless trio, Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey, has yet rejected Catesby's temptation to raise Gloucester to the throne This design, which Buckingham apparently favours, though rather inconsistently, Hastings fiercely opposes, and he

is therefore marked out for execution by Richard and Buckingham, the latter's consent to this atrocity being obtained by the bribe offered by Gloucester, who well knew his covetous nature, of the earldom of Hereford and certain articles of value. The next scene after the execution of the three, Vaughan, Grey, and Rivers, is in the Tower of London, where the Bishop of Ely, apparently a simple-minded man, ignorant of Richard's plots, Buckingham, Stanley, Catesby, Lovel, and others, are assembled. They are met here to discuss the coming coronation of young Edward V. In this scene Buckingham shows by his duplicity that he is a worthy imitator of Gloucester, while Hastings and the Bishop of Ely are complete dupes for so far, and seem almost as ignorant of the real characters of Richard and of Buckingham as if they were total strangers. In mentioning the coronation, Buckingham artfully asks:

> "Who knows the lord protector's mind herein?
> Who is most inward with the noble duke?"

Ely naturally replies:

> "Your grace, we think, should soonest know his mind."

Buckingham deceitfully answers:

> "We know each other's faces; for our hearts;
> He knows no more of mine than I of yours;
> Nor I of his, my lord, than you of mine,"

then addressing the next victim, he says:

> "Lord Hastings, you and he are near in love."

Hastings, still quite unsuspicious, replies:

> "I thank his grace, I know he loves me well;
> But for his purpose in the coronation,
> I have not sounded him, nor he delivered
> His gracious pleasure any way therein."

Gloucester enters greeting all around with the easy courtesy which usually imposed upon nearly every one he addressed. He compliments the worthy bishop about some fine strawberries the latter has, and the gratified prelate immediately departs to get some. When he is gone upon

this peaceful errand, Richard, taking Buckingham aside, says in earnest words:

> "Catesby hath sounded Hastings in our business,
> And finds the testy gentleman so hot,
> As he will lose his head ere give consent
> His master's child, as worshipfully he terms it,
> Shall lose the royalty of England's throne."

Buckingham asks him to withdraw, and without another word they go out, and soon the hospitable bishop re-enters, saying:

> "Where is my lord, the Duke of Gloucester?
> I have sent for these strawberries."

Hastings, now as ever completely deceived by Richard's manner as well as character, exclaims to his friend Stanley, who is evidently more shrewd and therefore more suspicious:

> "His grace looks cheerfully and smooth this morning:
> There's some conceit or other likes him well,
> When he doth bid good morrow with such spirit.
> I think there's ne'er a man in Christendom
> That can less hide his love or hate than he;
> For by his face straight shall you know his heart."

Stanley distrustfully asks:

> "What of his heart perceive you in his face
> By any likelihood he showed to-day?"

Hastings confidently replies:

> "Marry, that with no man here he is offended.
> For if he were, he would have shown it in his looks."

Gloucester would likely have been delighted at these high, unconscious compliments to his deceptive powers, and after their utterance he and Buckingham re-enter, having evidently arranged their fatal plot, and doubtless are supported by armed followers, stationed near this scene, though they are not mentioned. Gloucester now surprises nearly all present except Buckingham by asking, as if suddenly, what certain people deserve who by plots or witchcraft, at this time believed in, have threatened his life or caused his deformity. Hastings immediately, as

the chief man present, declares that such guilt deserves death and Richard promptly retorts:

> "Then be your eyes the witness of this ill.
> See how I am bewitch'd: behold mine arm
> Is, like a blasted sapling, wither'd up:"

and then fiercely accuses the unlucky queen allied with Jane Shore:

> "That by their witchcraft thus have marked me."

Hastings, astounded, and quite taken by surprise, begins:

> "If they have done this deed, my noble lord——"

when Richard promptly interrupts, pretending to be enraged at his alleged injuries:

> "If! thou protector of this damned strumpet,
> Talk'st thou to me of 'ifs'? Thou art a traitor:
> Off with his head! now, by Saint Paul I swear,
> I will not dine until I see the same."

Then evidently directing some special followers, he says:

> "Some see it done
> The rest, that love me, rise and follow me."

All go out except the victim, now guarded by Catesby and Lovel, who with Ratcliff now preside sometimes in different places at the executions of Gloucester's foes. The doomed Hastings, knowing escape impossible, bitterly exclaims like a high-spirited man, remembering disregarded warnings and foreseeing the misery of his country:

> "Woe, woe for England! not a whit for me;
> For I, too fond, might have prevented this.
> . . . . . .
> Three times to-day my foot-cloth horse did stumble,
> And started when he look'd upon the Tower,
> As loth to bear me to the slaughter-house.
> O! now I need the priest that spake to me;
> I now repent I told the pursuivant,
> As 'twere triumphing, at mine enemies
> How they at Pomfret bloodily were butcher'd,
> And I myself secure in grace and favour."

He then, like the other previous victims though his foes recalls Queen Margaret's words of warning to all the

divided York faction against their dangerous champion Gloucester, but Catesby, the active instrument of his terrible master, like Ratcliff, has little patience with any victim, and exclaims:

> "Dispatch; my lord, the duke would be at dinner:
> Make a short shrift, he longs to see your head."

Hastings continues his lamentations, when Lovel interposes, like Ratcliff, saying:

> "Come, come, dispatch; 'tis bootless to exclaim."

Then Hastings, whose eyes are only now fully opened to the wickedness of the artful prince who has caused his ruin, exclaims prophetically:

> "O bloody Richard!—miserable England!
> I prophesy the fearfull'st time to thee
> That ever wretched age hath looked upon.
> Come, lead me to the block; bear him my head:
> They smile at me who shortly shall be dead."

This last allusion is likely to Buckingham among others, who is now Richard's chief counsellor, while Catesby, Ratcliff, and Lovel occupy a more subordinate position, eagerly executing their patron's will without apparently holding much private conference with him. The next scene introduces Gloucester and Buckingham preparing like two actors to perform their cunning devices before the Lord Mayor, evidently a simple, unsuspicious man, with whose character they are likely well acquainted by personal knowledge or report. Gloucester, as if training his ambitious but more dull associate for the stage, asks him:

> "Come, cousin, canst thou quake, and change thy colour,
> Murder thy breath in the middle of a word,
> And then again begin, and stop again,
> As if thou wert distraught and mad with terror?"

Buckingham, apparently knowing more about what are sometimes called stage tricks than many English gentlemen even of the present time, confidently replies:

> "Tut! I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
> Speak, and look back, and pry on every side,
> Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,

Intending deep suspicion; ghastly looks
Are at my service, like enforced smiles;
And both are ready in their offices
To grace my stratagems."

The Lord Mayor now approaches, conducted by that ready instrument of evil, Catesby, and soon followed by the other satellites, Ratcliff and Lovel, bearing the head of Hastings. At this sight Gloucester pretends to lament his victim's death before the Lord Mayor, craftily mentioning among the sins of Hastings his being the protector or friend of Jane Shore. Lovel first exclaims:

"Here is the head of that ignoble traitor,
The dangerous and unsuspected Hastings,"

and then Gloucester exclaims in assumed sorrow:

"So dear I lov'd the man, that I must weep.
I took him for the plainest harmless man
Made him my book, wherein my soul recorded
The history of all her secret thoughts:
So smooth he daub'd his vice with show of virtue,
That, his apparent open guilt omitted,
I mean his conversation with Shore's wife,
He lived from all attainder of suspect."

Buckingham now comes to the point, exclaiming:

"Well, well, he was the covert'st shelter'd traitor
That ever lived,"

and then accuses Hastings of having plotted his own and Gloucester's assassinations before the astonished Lord Mayor, who, respecting all three, hardly knows what to think or believe, and exclaims:

"Had he done so?"

Gloucester, perceiving his surprise, hastens to convince him:

"What! think ye we are Turks or infidels?
Or that we would, against the form of law,
Proceed thus rashly in the villain's death,
But that the extreme peril of the case,
The peace of England, and our person's safety,
Enforc'd us to this execution?"

The Mayor, evidently no match for these two dangerous, unscrupulous men, replies completely deceived:

"Now fair befall you! he deserv'd his death;
And you, my good lords, both have well proceeded,
To warn false traitors from the like attempts,"

and he adds, like a worthy but rather dull man:

"I never look'd for better at his hands,
After he once fell in with Mistress Shore."

Gloucester then entreats the Mayor to excuse or justify the execution of Hastings before the London people,

"Who haply may
Misconstrue us in him, and wail his death,"

and the mystified Lord Mayor replies:

"Do not doubt, right noble princes both,
But I'll acquaint our duteous citizens
With all your just proceedings in this case."

The Mayor departs, and Gloucester tells Buckingham to follow him to a meeting at the Guildhall, and there insinuate, with all his persuasive powers, that the two imprisoned young princes are illegitimate. Buckingham, who is now apparently ready to do anything against them except to authorise their deaths, at once accepts the commission, and Gloucester adds these remarkable words:

"Tell them, when that my mother went with child
Of that insatiate Edward, noble York
My princely father then had wars in France;
And by true computation of the time,
Found that the issue was not his begot;
Which well appeared in his lineaments,
Being nothing like the noble duke, my father.
But touch this sparingly, as 'twere far off;
Because, my lord, you know my mother lives."

The covetous ambitious Buckingham eagerly replies:

"Fear not, my lord, I'll play the orator
As if the golden fee for which I plead
Were for myself,"

and Richard rejoins:

"If you thrive well, bring them to Baynard's castle;
Where you shall find me well accompanied
With reverend fathers and well-learned bishops."

Buckingham departs, fully instructed, and Richard then addresses his more humble followers, Catesby and Lovel, sends the latter to a Rev. Dr Shaw, and the former to a Friar Penker, two churchmen who for a time at least were dévoted to his service, telling them both to meet him at Baynard's Castle, and when alone exclaims:

> "Now will I in, to take some privy order,
> To draw the brats of Clarence out of sight;
> And to give notice that no manner of person
> Have any time recourse unto the princes."

While this arch plotter is pursuing his schemes for some time with success, the English people are beginning, though slowly, to really understand his dangerous character. Their growing suspicion of a prince, hitherto trusted as well as admired for his extraordinary valour, is partly revealed by a scrivener who in the next scene appears bearing the written charge against Lord Hastings, and who says to himself in a street what he would not have dared express before others:

> "This is the indictment of the good Lord Hastings;
> . . . . . .
> Eleven hours I spent to write it o'er,
> For yesternight by Catesby was it brought me.
> . . . . . .
> And yet within these five hours Hastings liv'd
> Untainted, unexamin'd, free, at liberty.
> Here's a good world the while! Why, who's so gross
> That cannot see this palpable device?
> . . . . . .
> Bad is the world; and all will come to naught,
> When such ill dealing must be seen in thought."

The next scene is at the appointed place, Baynard's Castle, where Gloucester and Buckingham meet. The latter however, despite his art, has not succeeded as he hoped in so easily deceiving the London citizens, who he avows heard him in profound and evidently distrustful silence. Richard asks how they received the statement about the illegitimacy of the princes. Buckingham replies that after mentioning this charge, and praising Richard's bravery and victories, he vainly urged them to shout:

> "God save Richard, England's royal king!"

Gloucester asks:

"And did they so?"

when Buckingham is forced to answer:

"No, so God help me, they spake not a word;
But like dumb statues or breathing stones,
Gaz'd on each other, and look'd deadly pale.
Which when I saw, I reprehended them,
And ask'd the Mayor what meant this wilful silence:
His answer was, the people were not wont
To be spoke to but by the recorder.
Then he was urged to tell my tale again;
. . . . . .
When he had done, some followers of mine own,
At lower end of the hall, hurl'd up their caps,
And some ten voices cried, '*God save King Richard!*'
And thus I took the vantage of those few,
'*Thanks, gentle citizens and friends,*' quoth I;
'*This general applause and cheerful shout*
Argues your wisdom and your love to Richard:'
And even here brake off and came away."

Gloucester, usually so calm and self-controlled, loses patience at this news, which evidently surprises him, perhaps slightly delaying his plans, and angrily exclaims:

"What tongueless blocks were they! would they not speak?"

Buckingham, also disappointed, replies:

"No, by my troth, my lord."

The Mayor and some London citizens now approach, and Buckingham then advises Richard to assume some fear or hesitation, trying to make this prince if possible more artful than he is by nature, saying:

"And look you get a prayer-book in your hand,
And stand between two churchmen, good my lord:
For on that ground I'll build a holy descant:
And be not easily won to our requests;
Play the maid's part, still answer nay, and take it."

Richard likely amused as well as gratified by his devoted follower trying to imitate his own cunning, replies:

"I go; and if you plead as well for them
As I can say nay to thee for myself,
No doubt we bring it to a happy issue."

He withdraws, and Buckingham then receives the Lord

Mayor with some London people, while the ever active Catesby pretends to take messages between Gloucester and Buckingham. Catesby then says, as if from Gloucester:

> "He doth entreat your grace, my noble lord,
> To visit him to-morrow or next day,
> He is within, with two right reverend fathers
> Divinely bent to meditation;
> And in no worldly suit would he be moved,
> To draw him from his holy exercise."

Buckingham readily replies, with real confidence in the sly go-between:

> "Return, good Catesby, to thy lord again,
> Tell him, myself, the mayor and citizens
> . . . . . .
> Are come to have some conference with his grace."

Catesby, who well understands both his employers replies:

> "I'll signify so much unto him straight,"

and withdraws, while Buckingham then addressing the Mayor and citizens, exclaims with plausible eloquence:

> "Ah, ha! my lord, this prince is not an Edward,
> He is not lolling on a lewd day-bed,
> But on his knees at meditation;
> Not dallying with a brace of courtezans,
> But meditating with two deep divines;
> Not sleeping, to engross his idle body,
> But praying, to enrich his watchful soul,
> Happy were England, would this virtuous prince
> Take on his grace the sovereignty thereof:
> But sure, I fear, we shall not win him to it."

The simple duped Mayor anxiously replies:

> "Marry, God forbid his grace should say us nay."

Catesby now re-enters with a new invention of deceit, perhaps the joint composition of Richard and himself:

Catesby:

> "He wonders to what end you have assembled
> Such troops of citizens to come to him,
> His grace not being warn'd thereof before:
> My lord, he fears you mean no good to him."

Buckingham, with assumed frankness, replies:

"Sorry I am my noble cousin should
Suspect me that I mean no good to him;
By heaven, we come to him in perfect love;
And so once more return, and tell his grace."

Catesby departs, and Buckingham deceitfully observes to the puzzled Lord Mayor:

"When holy and devout religious men
Are at their beads, 'tis much to draw them thence;
So sweet is zealous contemplation."

Richard himself now appears in a gallery above the others, and between two bishops, when the worthy Mayor exclaims:

"See where he stands between two clergymen."

and Buckingham promptly rejoins:

"Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,
To stay him from the fall of vanity;
And see, a book of prayer in his hand,
True ornament to know a holy man."

He then addresses his chief:

"Famous Plantagenet, most gracious prince,
Lend favourable ear to our requests,
And pardon us the interruption
Of thy devotion and right Christian zeal."

Gloucester meekly asks:

"What is your grace's pleasure?"

and Buckingham, as if speaking for the London citizens, whose representatives remain silent during this strange scene, implores Richard to take the crown. He employs noble, high-sounding words, likely suggested to him previously by Richard himself:

"Know then, it is your fault that you resign
The supreme seat, the throne majestical,
The sceptred office of your ancestors,
The lineal glory of your royal house,
To the corruption of a blemish'd stock;
. . . . . .
We heartily solicit
Your gracious self to take on you the charge
And kingly government of this your land;
Not as protector, steward, substitute,
. . . . . .
But as successively from blood to blood,
Your right of birth, your empery, your own."

At this moment, what Buckingham really wished done with the imprisoned princes it would be hard to say. He certainly never contemplated their assassination, yet did his best to aid their uncle in usurping their rights. Richard now answers him in the style they doubtless agreed upon, deprecating the idea of taking the crown, and, replying at length to Buckingham's speech, ends by thus alluding to his late brother, Edward, and the young princes:

> "There is no need of me;
> (And much I need to help you, were there need;)
> The royal tree hath left us royal fruit,
> Which, mellow'd by the stealing hours of time,
> Will well become the seat of majesty,
> And make, no doubt, us happy by his reign.
> On him I lay that you would lay on me,
> The right and fortune of his happy stars;
> Which God defend that I should wring from him!"

Buckingham replies by mentioning the alleged illegitimacy of the princes, exclaiming:

> "You say that Edward is your brother's son:
> So say we too, but not by Edward's wife;
> . . . . . .
> A care-crazed mother to a many sons,
> A beauty-waning and distressed widow,
> Even in the afternoon of her best days,
> Made prize and purchase of his wanton eye,
> . . . . . .
> More bitterly could I expostulate,
> Save that, for reverence to some alive,
> I give a sparing limit to my tongue.
> Then, good my lord, take to your royal self
> This proffer'd benefit of dignity."

The deceived Mayor and the cunning Catesby add their entreaties to Buckingham's, the Mayor exclaiming:

> "Do, good my lord; your citizens entreat you,"

and Catesby, as if alluding to his own legal knowledge, eagerly adds:

> "O! make them joyful: grant their lawful suit."

Richard, a prince of dissemblers, who probably enjoys

this scene, or thinks it good practice for his powers, meekly replies:

"Alas! why would you heap those cares on me?
I am unfit for state and majesty:
I do beseech you, take it not amiss;
I cannot nor I will not yield to you."

Then Buckingham, assuming a partly haughty, partly injured tone, replies:

"If you refuse it,—as in love and zeal,
Loth to depose the child, your brother's son;
As well we know your tenderness of heart
And gentle, kind, effeminate remorse,
Which we have noted in you to your kindred,
And equally indeed to all estates;—
Yet know, whe'r you accept our suit or no,
Your brother's son shall never reign our king;
But we will plant some other in the throne,
To the disgrace and downfall of your house:
And in this resolution here we leave you.
Come, citizens, we will entreat no more."

Buckingham and the citizens withdraw, or are about to do so, when Catesby, who always seems to know what to say, and is quite in Richard's confidence, persuasively exclaims:

"Call them again, sweet prince; accept their suit:
If you deny them, all the land will rue it."

Richard, as if yielding most reluctantly, replies:

"Will you enforce me to a world of cares?
Call them again: I am not made of stone,
But penetrable to your kind entreaties."

Catesby departs, probably laughing, and rejoicing to himself, as Richard concludes:

"Albeit against my conscience and my soul."

Buckingham and the citizens re-enter; it is not said whether Catesby returns or not, and Richard calmly addresses them:

"Cousin of Buckingham, and sage, grave men,
Since you will buckle fortune on my back.
To bear her burden, whe'r I will or no,
I must have patience to endure the load:

> But if black scandal or foul-fac'd reproach
> Attend the sequel of your imposition,
> Your mere enforcement shall acquittance me
> From all the impure blots and stains thereof;
> For God He knows, and you may partly see,
> How far I am from the desire of this."

The worthy Mayor exclaims:

> "God bless your grace! we see it, and will say it."

Buckingham, at length gratified, says to his able patron:

> "Then I salute you with this royal title:
> Long live King Richard, England's worthy king!"

The citizens, either frightened and bewildered, or credulous, exclaim:

> "Amen."

then Gloucester and Buckingham fix the next day for the coronation, while Richard meekly says to the bishops, who remain silent during all this scene:

> "Come, let us to our holy work again.
> Farewell, my cousin; farewell, gentle friends."

This extraordinary scene, in great measure founded on history, ends the third act of this eventful play, and in it the crafty arts of Richard, Buckingham, and Catesby are completely successful. Richard, indeed, hitherto has encountered no "foeman worthy of his steel" in either shrewd intelligence or knowledge of human nature. All about the English court admire or fear him, and though he is now becoming more and more distrusted, yet the people seem too undecided or bewildered to take any decided action to check his ambition. This astute prince, therefore, uniting rare personal valour with extraordinary powers of deceit, is up to this time quite unopposed in obtaining the perilous supremacy to which his ambitious spirit aspired.

The first scene of the next act is in London before the fatal Tower, where the widowed queen, her mother-in-law, the Duchess of York, with the Lady Anne, Clarence's young daughter, and the Marquis of Dorset, all meet,

wishing to see the imprisoned young princes. This scene is very pathetic, and though, perhaps, not actually founded on history, probably represents truly the real feelings of the persons introduced. The Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir Robert Brakenbury, always devoted to Richard, though perhaps not privy to all his designs, denies admission, saying these alarming words:

"The king hath strictly charged the contrary."

The hapless queen-mother then asks in real terror, and fearing the worst:

"*The king!* who's that?"

Brakenbury, to calm suspicion for the present, replies:

"I cry you mercy. I mean the lord protector."

and the queen exclaims:

"The Lord protect him from that kingly title!
Hath he set bounds betwixt their love and me?
I am their mother; who should keep me from them?"

The old duchess then tries to speak with some authority, exclaiming:

"I am their father's mother and will see them."

The Lady Anne then tries to tempt Brakenbury, saying:

"I'll bear thy blame
And take thy office from thee, on my peril."

Brakenbury, however, probably knowing that it would be as much as his life was worth to give way to any of the three ladies, firmly replies:

"No, madam, no; I may not leave it so:
I am bound by oath, and therefore pardon me."

Lord Stanley now appears, who, though obeying Richard through fear, is becoming less and less devoted to him. Yet for the present he acts as his messenger, ordering the Lady Anne to repair to Westminster:

"There to be crowned Richard's royal queen."

This news terrifies the widowed queen, Elizabeth, who, foreseeing Richard's absolute power, and the danger of her

relatives, entreats her son Dorset to fly from England, and take refuge abroad with the young Earl of Richmond, the rising hope and chief of the subjected Lancastrian party. This young man, the future Henry VII., is now for the first time mentioned in the play, and hitherto has taken no part in the affairs of his country. Stanley, who apparently obeys and distrusts Richard at the same time, quite approves of Dorset's flight to save himself, saying to the queen:

> "Full of wise care is this your counsel, madam."

and then addressing her son Dorset:

> "Take all the swift advantage of the time;
> You shall have letters from me to my son
> In your behalf, to meet you on the way."

Evidently the princesses and Stanley all dread what is coming on England, but as yet seem confused as well as terrified at the rapid success of Gloucester's plots and schemes. The three ladies alike bewail the terrible time in vain, but natural lamentations. They attribute their woes to Richard, the Lady Anne bitterly regretting in almost frantic words her own forced union with the tyrant, whose winning words would seem now to have lost their influence over her weak mind. The three princesses being forced now to separate, bid each other an affecting farewell. The venerable duchess addresses Dorset, Anne, and Queen Elizabeth severally in solemn words, the more impressive considering who she is, and her present high, dignified, yet virtually powerless position. She first says to Dorset:

> "Go thou to Richmond, and good fortune guide thee!"

then to the Lady Anne:

> "Go thou to Richard, and good angels tend thee!"

then to the queen:

> "Go thou to sanctuary, and good thoughts possess thee!
> I to my grave, where peace and rest lie with me!
> Eighty odd years of sorrow have I seen."

The queen, still thinking of her unfortunate little sons,

looks sadly back at the walls of the Tower, addressing them in pathetic beautiful language, which ends this scene:

> "Stay yet; look back with me unto the Tower.
> Pity, you ancient stones, those tender babes
> Whom envy hath immur'd within your walls,
> Rough cradle for such pretty little ones!
> Rude ragged nurse, old sullen playfellow
> For tender princes, use my babies well.
> So foolish sorrow bids your stones farewell."

The following scene is a thorough change from the pathetic to one of stately triumph and dangerous intrigue. Richard is in a room of state in the palace, crowned, with Buckingham, Catesby, and other adherents around him. In the midst of his triumph, Richard well knows he is in constant danger from the friends of the imprisoned princes, and must always be in danger whilst they live. In fact, during his terrible ascent to power after one obstacle is removed, another arises, and his two nephews are now his chief foes. He would be indeed lawful king were they and the young son of Clarence removed. This latter prince, called Earl of Warwick, had a strange history. His uncle Richard had, to use his own words, to "draw him out of sight" for a time, but seems to have kept him a prisoner, and even in the play terms him foolish, and says he has no fear of him. This unfortunate prince was always a prisoner till executed by Henry VII. for no offence but that of his royal blood. At the present time, however, the imprisoned orphan is of secondary consequence to his royal cousins in the Tower. Richard now hopes, perhaps expects Buckingham, his first and chief adherent, to be a willing instrument in getting rid of these youthful foes. He bids all around to stand apart, and then, acknowledging Buckingham's past services to him, exclaims:

> "Thus high, by thy advice
> And thy assistance, is King Richard seated."

So far all is right between them, but now the temptation begins, which might well be expected, considering Richard's dangerous elevation, yet which utterly confounds Buckingham. Richard knows that in the midst of his

sudden triumph he is surrounded by perils on every side, and therefore proceeds:

> "But shall we wear these honours for a day,
> Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them?"

Buckingham, as if overjoyed at seeing his patron enthroned, and disregarding future dangers, eagerly replies:

> "Still live they, and for ever may they last!"

Richard then, not unreasonably in a political sense, continues:

> "O! Buckingham, now do I play the touch,
> To try if thou be current gold indeed:
> Young Edward lives:—think now what I would say."

Buckingham, who shows less shrewdness in this conversation than before, replies:

> "Say on, my gracious sovereign."

Richard retorts, probably surprised at his slowness:

> "Why, Buckingham, I say I would be king."

Buckingham, as before, thoroughly satisfied with the triumph of the present moment, replies:

> "Why, so you are, my thrice-renowned liege."

Richard promptly retorts with another hint:

> "Ha! am I king? 'Tis so; but Edward lives."

Still Buckingham stolidly replies:

> "True, noble prince,"

and Richard now loses patience, or pretends to do so, fiercely exclaiming in words which cannot be mistaken:

> "O bitter consequence,
> That Edward still should live!"

He perhaps then imitates Buckingham's manner while repeating his words with disdain:

> '*True, noble prince.*'
> Cousin, thou wast not wont to be so dull:—
> Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead;
> And I would have it suddenly perform'd.
> What say'st thou now? speak suddenly, be brief."

Buckingham, evidently more shocked or surprised than he should have been, knowing his master's antecedents and the perils of his present position, answers as if timidly:

"Your grace may do your pleasure."

This implied disapproval provokes Richard, and evidently surprises as well as irritates him. While noticing the sudden cold manner of his former eager associate, he exclaims:

"Tut, tut! thou art all ice, thy kindness freezeth.
Say, have I thy consent that they shall die?"

This fearful question shocks Buckingham, who, horrified at the idea, yet still devoted to Richard, replies, with mingled dread and hesitation:

"Give me some little breath, some pause, dear lord,
Before I positively speak herein
I will resolve your grace immediately,"

and goes out, leaving Richard in evident surprise, anger, and disappointment, while the ever watchful Catesby, knowing him well and observing him closely, says probably to some zealous partisan:

"The king is angry: see, he gnaws his lip."[1]

Richard, descending from his throne, takes a new resolution, saying to himself:

"I will converse with iron-witted fools
And unrespective boys; none are for me
That look into me with considerate eyes.—
High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect."

He clearly sees that Buckingham's hesitation and withdrawal, though only for a short time, indicate desertion from his cause, and calls a young page up to him. This youth, apparently sharp-witted and intelligent, well knows

[1] Catesby's observation was likely true to nature on this occasion, if Richard's hostile biographer, Sir Thomas More, can be trusted. "And while he did muse upon anything standing he would bite his under lip continually whereby a man might perceive his cruel nature within his wretched body."—"Life of Richard III."

the characters of some, perhaps the wildest among the courtiers, when Richard asks him:

> "Know'st thou not any whom corrupting gold
> Would tempt unto a close exploit of death?"

The youth evidently not startled at this terrible question, readily replies:

> "I know a discontented gentleman,
> Whose humble means match not his haughty mind:
> Gold were as good as twenty orators,
> And will, no doubt, tempt him to anything."[1]

Richard asks this dangerous man's name, and hears it is Sir James Tyrrel, whom he slightly knows. He at once sends the page for him, and when alone, gloomily, even menacingly, refers to his former favourite:

> "The deep-revolving witty Buckingham
> No more shall be the neighbour to my counsels.
> Hath he so long held out with me untired,
> And stops he now for breath? well, be it so."

Lord Stanley, who though obeying Richard is never much attached to him, now enters announcing Dorset's flight to France, where he is staying with Richmond, as he had been directed by his mother, the widowed queen. Richard then tells Catesby, who is always at his service, to report generally that the Lady Anne, his present wife, is ill and likely to soon die. He then rather strangely takes Catesby into his confidence about his niece Clarence's daughter, and her young brother, saying:

> "Inquire me out some mean-born gentleman,
> Whom I will marry straight to Clarence' daughter:
> The boy is foolish, and I fear not him."

This extraordinary piece of family confidence apparently confuses even the astute, hardened Catesby, for he says nothing, and Richard reprovingly exclaims:

> "Look how thou dream'st! I say again, give out
> That Anne my wife is sick and like to die:
> About it; for it stands me much upon
> To stop all hopes whose growth may damage me."

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[1] "The man had a high heart and sore longed upwards, not rising yet so fast as he had hoped, being hindered and kept under by the means of Sir Richard Ratcliff and Sir William Catesby, which thing this page well had marked and known."—More's "Life of Richard III."

Catesby departs with these strange directions, and Richard then contemplates himself marrying the late king's daughter, his niece, after the deaths of her two imprisoned young brothers, adding with a sort of recklessness, but without remorse or scruple:

"I must be married to my brother's daughter,
Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass.
. . . . . .
Uncertain way of gain! But I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin:
Tear-falling pity dwells not in this eye."

The page now re-enters, introducing Tyrrel the "discontented gentleman," whom Richard thus addresses:

"Is thy name Tyrrel?"

Tyrrel:

"James Tyrrel, and your most obedient subject."

Richard, as if taking him at his word, asks earnestly:

"Art thou, indeed?"

and the other readily answers:

"Prove me, my gracious sovereign,"

and Richard then asks:

"Dar'st thou resolve to kill a friend of mine?"

Tyrrel, in a sort of grim humour, replies:

"Please you; but I had rather kill two enemies."

Richard promptly retorts:

"Why, then thou hast it: two deep enemies,
Foes to my rest, and my sweet sleep's disturbers,
Are they that I would have thee deal upon.
Tyrrel, I mean those bastards in the Tower."

The alleged illegitimacy of the two princes, which few people believed in, was eagerly spread by Richard and his adherents at this time. Tyrrel, who, though a gentleman by birth, is quite as unscrupulous as the lowest ruffian, though not altogether remorseless, eagerly replies as if anxious to show loyalty to the new king:

"Let me have open means to come to them,
And soon I'll rid you from the fear of them."

Richard, all the more pleased at this alacrity after Buckingham's scruples, rejoins:

> "Thou sing'st sweet music. Come hither, Tyrrel:
> Go, by this token."

Tyrrel evidently approaches and kneels, and Richard proceeds:

> "Rise, and lend thine ear."

He whispers some unmentioned words to the villain, and then concludes decisively:

> "There is no more but so; say it is done,
> And I will love thee, and prefer thee too."

Tyrrel replies:

> "'Tis done, my gracious lord."

Richard, eager to make the most of this ready instrument, asks:

> "Shall we hear from thee, Tyrrel, ere we sleep?"

Tyrrel answers:

> "You shall, my lord,"

and then departs on his murderous mission, while Buckingham now re-enters, apparently still hesitating. Richard, however, has completely resolved to have nothing more to do with him. All his past services, eagerness, and exertions in his cause go for nothing with Richard directly the first sign of scrupulousness appears, and Buckingham has virtually signed his own death warrant when he showed hesitation in doing the usurper's will. Richard, however, having to some extent put Tyrrel in Buckingham's place, by transferring his confidence from the latter to the former, about slaying the princes, evidently amuses his sardonic spirit by trifling with his ambitious favourite, and watching his mortification. In his manner this wonderful dissembler betrays no irritation whatever, and Buckingham therefore begins calmly:

> "My lord, I have consider'd in my mind
> The late request that you did sound me in."

Richard coolly replies, as if he had more important things to think of:

"Well, let that pass,"

and then mentions Dorset's flight to France, evidently taking vindictive pleasure in keeping his anxious and hitherto most devoted follower in suspense, before altogether breaking with him. The ensuing conversation between these dangerous men, once so firmly united, well displays their respective characters. Richard is now thoroughly resolved on distrusting Buckingham utterly, while the latter is still partially deceived by his former patron, for whom he has done so much, and, like many of Richard's victims, never really knows him till too late. Richard apparently diverts himself by trifling with Buckingham's eager desire for his promised rewards of the earldom of Hereford and some valuables, by which he had been tempted to consent to the execution of Lord Hastings. Thus Richard for some little time keeps him in a fever of anxiety and eagerness, privately resolved on his death, ignoring all his expectations of reward, while making him listen to the news of the day, as well as to old recollections, which have nothing to do with Buckingham's claims or interests. Richard calmly begins, as if partly speaking to himself, knowing Buckingham hears, though not addressing him:

"Dorset is fled to Richmond."

Buckingham:

"I hear that news, my lord."

Richard as if addressing Lord Stanley, continues, while Buckingham has to listen:

"Stanley, he is your wife's son; well look to it."

Buckingham now urges his request with somewhat bold earnestness:

"My lord, I claim the gift, my due by promise,
For which your honour and your faith is pawn'd;
The earldom of Hereford and the moveables
The which you promised I should possess."

Richard, well knowing how to torment, as well as cajole his former associate, proceeds as if not hearing him:

"Stanley, look to your wife: if she convey
Letters to Richmond, you shall answer it."

Buckingham, longing for a reply, asks:

"What says your highness to my just demand?"

Richard, instead of answering, refers to old recollections, as if absorbed in them, and unaware of the other's presence:

"As I remember, Henry the Sixth
Did prophesy that Richmond should be king,
When Richmond was a little peevish boy.
A king! perhaps, perhaps——"

Buckingham begins:

"My lord!"

But Richard interrupts him by exclaiming as if asking a question of himself:

"How chance the prophet could not at that time
Have told me, I being by, that I should kill him?"

It may seem strange that Richard should here dignify his victim, the poor timid Henry VI., with the name of prophet. Yet Henry's words recorded by Shakespeare about young Richmond came true, which Richard now seems to apprehend.[1] Buckingham, however, taking no interest in the other's recollections, continues:

"My lord, your promise for the earldom——"

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[1] Henry VI. thus predicts of little Richmond to some assembled English nobles, even during the lifetime of his own heroic son Prince Edward, whom his adherents view as his heir.

"Come hither, England's hope—if secret powers
[*Laying his hand on his head.*
Suggest but truth to my divining thoughts.
This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.
His looks are full of peaceful majesty,
His head by nature fram'd to wear a crown,
His hand to wield a sceptre, and himself
Likely in time to bless a regal throne.
Make much of him, my lords, for this is he
Must help you more than you are hurt by me."
—*Henry VI.*, Part III., Act IV.

Richard again interrupts, exclaiming as if absorbed by old memories:

> "Richmond! When last I was at Exeter,
> The mayor in courtesy show'd me the castle,
> And called it Rougemont: at which name I started,
> Because a bard of Ireland told me once
> I should not live long after I saw Richmond."

Whether this fearless Irish bard ever existed, or was Shakespeare's invention, seems unknown, while Buckingham, evidently engrossed by his own interests, exclaims:

> "My lord——"

and must have been startled by Richard's again interrupting him, asking:

> "Ay, what's o'clock?"

Buckingham, instead of answering the question again, refers to his claims:

> "I am thus bold to put your grace in mind
> Of what you promis'd me."

Richard, still evading him, repeats:

> "Well, but what's o'clock?"

and Buckingham answers:

> "Upon the stroke of ten."

He is likely about to say more, when Richard, as if enjoying every moment of the other's anxiety, and liking to prolong it, says:

> "Well, let it strike?"

Then Buckingham in wonder asks:

> "Why let it strike?"

and receives this contemptuous answer:

> "Because that, like a Jack, thou keep'st the stroke
> Between thy begging and my meditation.
> I am not in the giving vein to-day."

At this scornful reply Buckingham loses patience, as perhaps his tormentor wished, and he eagerly, if not despairingly, asks:

> "Why, then resolve me whe'r you will or no."

Then though in few words Richard reveals his implacability, perhaps accompanied by a look in which Buckingham foresees his fate, which he himself had likely seen turned upon former victims. Richard, without flashing forth into rage, yet likely turning on Buckingham a glance of implacable scorn more fatal than any vehemence, briefly replies:

"Tut, tut, thou troublest me:"

repeating what are to Buckingham the hopeless words:

"I am not in the vein,"

and leaves his former adherent alone to his thoughts, which at once assure him of immediate danger to his life. He exclaims, astounded, terrified, and embittered all at once by his terrible tempter:

"Is it even so? repays he my true service
With such contempt? made I him king for this?"

Then remembering the former fatal results of Richard's scorn and hatred, he adds:

"O! let me think on Hastings, and be gone
To Brecknock, while my fearful head is on."

In this extraordinary scene Richard turns against his first adherent and last victim. Buckingham's high position and influence have hitherto made him Richard's able counsellor as well as eager follower. This double position was henceforth chiefly held by Catesby and Ratcliff, the faithful servants or the unscrupulous tools of Richard, as they might with equal justice be termed. Though Richard gratified his disappointment with Buckingham by abandoning him, his doing so may not have been altogether good policy, as it drew this powerful man and his friends entirely among Richard's increasing foes, and of course greatly added to the general odium in which he was beginning to be held. Yet Richard's proved valour, amounting to heroism, in the long civil war which had made his brother Edward the Fourth king, together with his great powers of persuasion, and shrewd personal knowledge of the chief men in England at this time, enabled him to command a

large force of loyal subjects till the end of his terrible career. Thus though Richard by his crimes alienated many of his followers, yet some among them never deserted him. Among these was the unscrupulous Sir James Tyrrel, whose language and conduct in this play do not seem very consistent. He had first eagerly undertaken to slay the princes, never showing reluctance, and committing this hateful crime without scruple. Yet in the scene after Richard's quarrel with Buckingham, Tyrrel enters like another man, talking to himself in sad, pitiful words, and exclaiming with horrified remorse:

> "The tyrannous and bloody deed is done;
> The most arch act of pitiful massacre
> That ever yet this land was guilty of,"

and adding that his subordinate ruffians, Dighton and Forrest

> "Melted with tenderness and mild compassion,"

while pathetically describing the sleeping children almost like a fond parent or sentimental poet. His two murderous attendants according to Tyrrel:

> "Wept like two children in their death's sad story.
> '*Lo! thus,*' quoth Dighton, '*lay those tender babes:*'
> '*Thus, thus,*' quoth Forrest, '*girdling one another*
> *Within their innocent alabaster arms:*
> *Their lips like four red roses on a stalk,*
> *Which in their summer beauty kiss'd each other.*
> *A book of prayers on their pillow lay;*
> *Which once,*' quoth Forrest, '*almost changed my mind;*
> *But O! the devil*'— there the villain stopp'd;
> When Dighton thus told on: '*We smothered*
> *The most replenished sweet work of nature,*
> *That from the prime creation e'er she framed.*'
> Hence both are gone with conscience and remorse;
> They could not speak; and so I left them both,
> To bear this tidings to the bloody king."

These imaginative if not sensitive ruffians are made to lay special stress on the beauty of their poor little victims, yet had the latter been ever so ugly, or of any age, the guilt of their murder would surely have been the same. But Tyrrel and his subordinates, though quite willing to commit murder for money, seem quite overcome and

penitent at beholding the innocent or beautiful faces of the sleeping children. Such utter change of feeling in such men would hardly be possible, all circumstances considered, and seems invented rather to gratify sympathetic readers, than to record historic truth. Tyrrel, in the midst of his pathetic soliloquy, is now accosted by his thoroughly practical remorseless master, at sight of whom Tyrrel, hastily suppressing or concealing his feelings, exclaims:

"All hail, my sovereign liege."

while Richard promptly asks:

"Kind Tyrrel, am I happy in thy news?"

and Tyrrel, as if perplexed between conscience and loyalty, replies:

"If to have done the thing you gave in charge
Beget your happiness, be happy then,
For it is done."

Richard, evidently fearing lest by any chance his young enemies, as he thinks them, may yet be alive, nervously asks:

"But didst thou see them dead?"

Tyrrel replies:

"I did, my lord."

Still Richard, not quite satisfied, again asks:

"And buried, gentle Tyrrel?"

Tyrrel then furnishes an additional particular:

"The chaplain of the Tower hath buried them;
But how, or in what place, I do not know."

Richard, as if really relieved from some haunting terror, and eager to reward this unscrupulous follower, replies:

"Come to me, Tyrrel, soon, at after-supper,
And thou shalt tell the process of their death.
Meantime, but think how I may do thee good,
And be inheritor of thy desire."

Tyrrel departs, and Richard speaking to himself briefly reveals his present position. Though now surrounded by increasing dangers this fierce prince, while in a state

of constant excitement, finds evident pleasure in it. His brave spirit and implacable nature alike support him for the present, and he exults over the deaths and misery of others, as if he were an actual madman, which towards the close of his terrible career he seems to more and more resemble. He says when there are none to hear him:

> "The son of Clarence have I pent up close;
> His daughter meanly I have match'd in marriage;
> The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's bosom,
> And Anne my wife hath bid the world good-night.
> Now, for I know the Bretagne Richmond aims
> At young Elizabeth, my brother's daughter,
> And by that knot, looks proudly on the crown,
> To her go I a jolly thriving wooer."

Catesby now enters saying that the Bishop of Ely has fled to Richmond, and that Buckingham is in open revolt at the head of an increasing force in the field. Richard, still fearless and resolute, exclaims:

> "Ely with Richmond troubles me more near
> Than Buckingham and his rash-levied strength.
> . . . . . .
> Go, muster men; my counsel is my shield;
> We must be brief when traitors brave the field."

The next scene in violation of all history, introduces the injured, vindictive Queen Margaret, who appears before the palace, saying that she has "slyly lurk'd in these confines to watch the waning of her enemies," whereas she was really first imprisoned and then sent abroad, whence she never returned. She is in the play, however, now strangely joined by the old Duchess of York, whose husband Margaret had put to death, and the Queen Elizabeth, widow of the late king. These two last named ladies bewail their miseries together, when Margaret comes forward, and sitting down beside them, they all three blame the present king, Richard III., for all or nearly all their different woes and losses. This unnatural, if not impossible, scene between these princesses is long and wearisome, and seems wholly incompatible with the history of the period. At length Margaret

withdraws, as if at complete liberty, saying to the others, both widows of her former foes:

> "Farewell, York's wife, and queen of sad mischance:
> These English woes shall make me smile in France,"

and to that country she goes, never to return to England, but in the play as a free traveller, in reality as a ransomed prisoner.[1] After her departure, King Richard enters meeting his mother and sister-in-law. They both eagerly reproach him for all the murders or executions he has committed or authorised, probably with loud vehemence, as he exclaims:

> "A flourish, trumpets! strike alarum, drums!
> Let not the heavens hear these tell-tale women
> Rail on the Lord's anointed. Strike I say!"

He then calmly addresses the two princesses, who are silenced by the noise:

> "Either be patient, and entreat me fair,
> Or with the clamorous report of war
> Thus will I drown your exclamations."

His mother asks him to hear her, and he replies with his former cool sarcasm, but soon as if reminding her of some bygone anger of hers perhaps against himself:

> "Madam, I have a touch of your condition,
> Which cannot brook the accent of reproof."

His mother then bitterly and doubtless truly recalls his conduct from childhood to the present time, without,

[1] The banished queen's last days in Burgundy are described by Sir Walter Scott. On a stormy day she receives the young son of the Lancastrian Lord Oxford, mentioned in this play. While despairing of the Lancaster faction reviving in England she throws from her a feather and a red rose she wore. The feather flutters away, while the wind drives back the rose to her. The youth exclaims: "Joy, joy. The tempest brings back the badge of Lancaster to its proper owner." "I accept the omen," said Margaret, "but it concerns yourself, noble youth, and not me. The feather which is borne away to waste and desolation is Margaret's emblem. My eyes will never see the restoration of the House of Lancaster. But you will live to behold it, and to aid to achieve it."—"Anne of Geierstein," chap. xxx.

however, naming his wonderful valour in the battle-field, which had gained for him such confidence in England:

> "Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
> Thy school-days frightful, desperate, wild and furious;
> Thy prime of manhood daring, bold and venturous;
> Thy age confirm'd, proud, subtle, bloody, treacherous,
> What comfortable hour canst thou name
> That ever grac'd me in thy company?"

This sad question the wicked son answers in sarcastic mockery:

> "Faith, none, but Humphrey Hour,[1] that call'd your grace
> To breakfast once forth of my company."

Then he coolly adds, without anger, but quite unmoved:

> "If I be so disgracious in your sight,
> Let me march on, and not offend you, madam.——
> Strike up the drum."

The duchess again exclaims:

> "O hear me speak, for I shall never see thee more."

He replies in a manner that for him is rather soothing:

> "Come, come, you are too bitter."

And she then solemnly denounces him for all his crimes, and wishes for the success of his foes against him. Thus the heroic champion of the York party in former days is now freely denounced for becoming its destructive enemy, and many members of that faction are beginning more and more to join or wish success to Richmond, the last representative of the defeated Lancastrians. Richard on this occasion makes no reply to his mother's last words, and is evidently heedless of her, but stops the Queen Elizabeth, who is about to follow her mother-in-law, and they have a long private talk together. Richard's new design is to marry her daughter, sister of the slain princes, the very idea of which she repels with indignant horror at first, and he again, as in his former talk with the Lady Anne, exerts all his extraordinary powers of deceit and persuasion to bring the injured queen to favour his views.

[1] The eating hour, according to Stevens and Howard Staunton.

Their conversation seems not only unnatural but repulsive. She for some time argues with him, repelling all his advances, and evidently distrusting everything he says. Yet at length, as if physically as well as mentally weakened by this fearful discussion with a man so powerful, and by the overpowering energy and cunning of her tempter, she exclaims, as if exhausted both in mind and body:

"Shall I be tempted of the devil thus?"

and he replies frankly:

"Ay, if the devil tempt thee to do good."

Queen Elizabeth replies with a question, as if perplexed or bewildered by what she hears, and all she knows:

"Shall I go win my daughter to thy will?"

when he answers:

"And be a happy mother by the deed."

She replies:

"I go. Write to me very shortly,
And you shall understand from me her mind."

Richard, thinking he has quite succeeded, exclaims:

"Bear her my true love's kiss; and so farewell,"

and after she goes, he exclaims, with some reason:

("Relenting fool, and shallow changing woman!")

This hateful intrigue, however, was destined to come to nothing, though it was said by some that the queen was in its favour, while her daughter very naturally opposed it, The general indignation against the usurper is now spreading fast throughout England, and Richard apparently finds he has too many enemies endangering him to pursue his last love scheme further at present. Every moment of his excited, dangerous, and threatened life is now devoted to plans and precautions. His two most faithful followers, or, more justly speaking, his unscrupulous instruments. Catesby and Ratcliff, now enter, the latter announces that Richmond is coming from France expecting the aid of Buckingham and other malcontents at present in arms.

Richard, for the first time, seems rather perplexed between all his schemes and perils, and exclaims with his two satellites beside him, whom he chiefly trusts:

"Some light-foot friend post to the Duke of Norfolk:
Ratcliff, thyself, or Catesby; where is he?"

This ready gentleman, usually at hand, replies:

"Here, my good lord,"

and Richard says:

"Catesby, fly to the duke."

Catesby, replies:

"I will, my lord, with all convenient haste."

Richard:

"Ratcliff, come hither. Post to Salisbury:
When thou comest thither."

He stops and turns fiercely on Catesby, exclaiming:

"Dull, unmindful villain,
Why stay'st thou here, and go'st not to the duke?"

Catesby, who on this occasion is more cool and collected than his excited master, calmly replies by a sensible question:

"First, mighty liege, tell me your highness' pleasure,
What from your grace I shall deliver to him?"

Richard remembers himself, and graciously answers:

"O! true, good Catesby: bid him levy straight
The greatest strength and power he can make,
And meet me suddenly at Salisbury."

Catesby answers promptly:

"I go,"

and departs, when Ratcliff naturally asks:

"What, may it please you, shall I do at Salisbury?

Richard, as if forgetting he had first told Ratcliff to go there, exclaims:

"Why, what wouldst thou do there before I go?"

Ratcliff truly answers:

"Your highness told me I should post before,"

and Richard replies, as if confused:

"My mind is changed,"

and then asks Lord Stanley, who enters, what is the news. This nobleman is evidently frightened, and occupies a singular position in English politics, having married Richmond's mother, though remaining in Richard's service. The latter therefore naturally suspects his fidelity, but resolves to use a man of his position and influence as long as he can do so safely. He watches him, however, closely, and as in the case of Buckingham, seems to take pleasure in observing and increasing his agitation or perplexity. Stanley, answering him about what news, replies in evident hesitation:

"None good, my liege, to please you with the hearing;
Nor none so bad but well may be reported."

Richard suspiciously retorts:

"Heyday, a riddle! neither good nor bad?
What need'st thou run so many miles about,
When thou may'st tell thy tale the nearest way?
Once more, what news?"

Stanley answers without comment:

"Richmond is on the seas."

At the mention of his young rival's name, the only one of whom Richard would seem to have a prophetic dread, he exclaims in a sudden burst of passion:

"There let him sink, and be the seas on him!
White-liver'd runagate! what doth he there?"

Stanley, doubtless frightened, can only reply:

"I know not, mighty sovereign, but by guess."

Richard sarcastically again asks:

"Well, as you guess?"

Then Stanley has to tell the news, now generally known:

"Stirr'd up by Dorset, Buckingham, and Morton,
He makes for England, here to claim the crown."

Richard, well knowing that by legal right he claims the throne before Richmond while he has young Warwick in prison, asks Stanley with haughty defiance, while awaiting his coming reply:

"Is the chair empty? is the sword unsway'd?
Is the king dead? the empire unpossess'd?
What heir of York is there alive but we?"

To this query Stanley might have replied:

"Your poor young prisoner, Lord Warwick,"

but of course dares to say no such thing, and so Richard proceeds:

"And who is England's king but great York's heir?
Then, tell me, what makes he upon the seas?"

Stanley, evidently flinching under the terrible eye now fixed upon him, can only answer:

"Unless for that, my liege, I cannot guess."

Richard takes up his words with keen suspicion:

"Unless for that he comes to be your liege,
You cannot guess wherefore the Welshman comes."

Then without waiting for reply Richard adds with grim suspicion:

"Thou wilt revolt and fly to him I fear."

Stanley, the least loyal of Richard's present adherents, longing to leave him, yet afraid to do so, replies with an eagerness which never deceives the usurper:

"No, mighty liege; therefore mistrust me not."

Richard then suspiciously asks:

"Where is thy power then to beat him back?
Where be thy tenants and thy followers?
Are they not now upon the western shore,
Safe-conducting the rebels from their ships?"

Stanley replies:

"No, my good lord, my friends are in the north."

Richard retorts:

"Cold friends to me; what do they in the north
When they should serve their Sovereign in the west?"

Stanley, more and more frightened, pleads in answer:

"They have not been commanded, mighty king,
Pleaseth your majesty to give me leave,
I'll muster up my friends, and meet your grace
Where and what time your majesty shall please."

Richard, who guesses Stanley's secret thoughts, yet wishes to have his services to the last, sarcastically replies:

"Ay, thou wouldst be gone to join with Richmond
But I'll not trust thee."

Stanley again vainly protests:

"Most mighty sovereign,
You have no cause to hold my friendship doubtful,
I never was, nor never will be false."

This was hitherto true, as Stanley was a firm adherent to the York party, but Richard, while resolved to use his influence, knows how to keep him in his power, and therefore says with decisive emphasis in words terrible to hear from such a prince.

"Go then and muster men: but leave behind
Your son, George Stanley."

This order is doubtless heard by some of Richard's followers, eager to enforce obedience, and he proceeds:

"Look your heart be firm,
Or else his head's assurance is but frail."

Stanley, dreading this fatal threat, yet knowing that both he and his son are completely in the tyrant's power, can only answer:

"So deal with him as I prove true to you,"

and departs. Three messengers now arrive in succession with the unwelcome news of a general rising in different parts of England. Richard hears the first two in silence but when the third begins to tell his news, saying:

"The army of great Buckingham——"

Richard alarmed and angry, yet never really frightened, interrupts him, and, rather like Cleopatra, strikes the innocent messenger for bringing bad news, exclaiming to all three:

"Out on ye, owls! nothing but songs of death?
There, take thou that, till thou bring better news."

The struck messenger then explains to his great advantage that Buckingham's army has been dispersed by recent floods, and the duke himself has:

> "Wander'd away alone,
> No man knows whither."

Richard, relieved and grimly joking, replies:

> "I cry thee mercy:
> There is my purse to cure that blow of thine."

A fourth messenger then comes announcing that Dorset and Sir Thomas Lovel are in arms, but that Richmond has returned from England to France again. This latter intelligence is untrue, but Richard, partly believing it, exclaims fiercely:

> "March on, march on, since we are up in arms;
> If not to fight with foreign enemies,
> Yet to beat down these rebels here at home."

The zealous Catesby, now Richard's chief confidant, enters, exclaiming with delight:

> "My liege, the Duke of Buckingham is taken;
> That is the best news: That the Earl of Richmond
> Is with a mighty power landed at Milford
> Is colder news, but yet they must be told."

Richard, alike impatient and vindictive, promptly exclaims at this news:

> "Away towards Salisbury! while we reason here
> A royal battle might be won and lost."

Then recollecting the doomed fallen favourite, he adds with suppressed ferocity:

> "Some one take order Buckingham be brought
> To Salisbury; the rest march on with me."

This brief yet fatal order is the only allusion this implacable tyrant makes to his former chief adherent, now his prisoner, and soon to be his victim.[1] The next scene,

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[1] In some dramatic versions of this famous play, Richard is represented exclaiming:

> "Off with his head, so much for Buckingham."

But these words, though much in Richard's style, and perhaps what he really said, are not those of Shakespeare. Mr Charles Dickens makes a most witty allusion to these imputed words when writing on "Private

though short, is important and explanatory. It is in Stanley's house, where this terrified perplexed nobleman reveals his thoughts to a Sir Christopher Urswick, a priest devoted to the Lancastrian party, and to him Stanley says:

> "Tell Richmond this from me:
> That in the sty of this most bloody boar
> My son George Stanley is frank'd up in hold:
> If I revolt, off goes young George's head;
> The fear of that withholds my present aid.
> So get thee gone; commend me to thy lord.
> Tell him the queen hath heartily consented
> He should espouse Elizabeth her daughter.
> . . . . . .
> These letters will resolve him of my mind."

Stanley is among the many Englishmen to whom the character of Richard III. is only beginning to be known. Though living always in England, this prince, owing, presumably, to his extraordinary arts and proved valour combined, had completely deceived his two brothers, as well as most of the distinguished Englishmen of his time. When at length he became partially revealed before the loyal and trustful English nation, he still retained a strong party, who, to the last, were practically devoted to him. His brothers, Edward IV. and Clarence, the noblemen Buckingham, Hastings, and Stanley, were the principal personages who were all more or less mistaken, despite intimate acquaintance, in their estimate of this man, whom they thought they well knew, and for a long time trusted completely. Stanley, longing to join the invading Richmond, dares not yet do so; but, like many other distinguished Englishmen, is now praying for the invader's triumph, while Richard, easily guessing Stanley's real feelings, holds his son a hostage for his father's fidelity.

The next scene and fifth act introduces the execu-

Theatricals," in "Sketches by Boz." "The 'Off with his head' is sure to bring down the applause, and it is very easy to do. 'Orf with his 'ed' (very quick and loud—then slow and sneeringly)—'So much for Bu-u-u-uckingham!' Lay the emphasis on the 'uck,' get yourself gradually into a corner, and work with your right hand, while you're saying it, as if you were feeling your way, and it is sure to do."

tion of the unfortunate Buckingham. This man, ambitious, covetous, unscrupulous, and nearly as deceitful as Richard, had, at length, showed reluctance to sanction the latter's fearful career of iniquity, and from that moment all his former aid to the tyrant was ignored, and only a traitor's death was before him. Buckingham had eagerly connived at the executions of many of his fellow-Englishmen, who trusted, or at least never suspected him. He had resolutely "held out untired," as Richard admitted, during a long course of political intrigues and consequent state executions, but the tyrant's suggestion to slay the young princes had struck Buckingham with horror, not altogether consistent, perhaps, with his former unscrupulousness, and which evidently surprised, as well as mortally offended his tempter himself. Buckingham, however, well knew there were no half measures with Richard; his adherents must obey him in everything, or be treated as foes. Richard's last scornful words:

"Tut, tut, thou troublest me, I am not in the vein,"

likely accompanied by a glance there was no mistaking, had convinced the hitherto devoted Buckingham that nothing but death awaited him from the implacable king whom he had so obeyed and revered. He then immediately joined the revolt, but was soon captured and sentenced to death as a rebel taken in arms against the very king whom he had so eagerly aided to make such. He now makes a last despairing effort to see Richard. Addressing the sheriff leading him to execution, he exclaims:

"Will not King Richard let me speak with him?"

and the sheriff has to reply;

"No, my good lord; therefore be patient."

It was said, indeed, that on this occasion he had a knife or dagger concealed about his person, meaning to stab the king, had he been allowed to see him. This story is told in Shakespeare's play of *Henry VIII.*; yet it seems very unlikely that a prisoner in the power of the

suspicious, crafty Richard could have remained unsearched, or by any chance have concealed dangerous weapons about him. All Richard's captives were probably well examined from head to foot, directly they became such; yet this statement, never either verified or disproved, had evidently obtained some credence for Shakespeare to bring it prominently forward, and it was not impossible, considering the exasperation against Richard at this period. Buckingham at the scaffold remembers Richard's many victims, some of whom had suffered by his aid or connivance, and exclaims:

> "Hastings, and Edward's children, Grey, and Rivers,
> Holy King Henry, and thy fair son Edward,
> Vaughan, and all that have miscarried
> By underhand corrupted foul injustice,
> If that your moody, discontented souls
> Do through the clouds behold this present hour,
> Even for revenge mock my destruction!"

His remorseful and somewhat fanciful mind then makes him ask:

> "This is All-Souls' day, fellows, is it not?"

The sheriff replies:

> "It is, my lord,"

and Buckingham, conscience-struck, exclaims:

> "Why, then All-Souls' day is my body's doomsday.
> This is the day which, in King Edward's time,
> I wish'd might fall on me, when I was found
> False to his children or his wife's allies;
> This, this All-Souls' day to my fearful soul
> Is the determined respite of my wrongs.
> That high All-Seer which I dallied with
> Hath turn'd my feigned prayer on my head,
> And given in earnest what I begged in jest.
> Thus doth he force the swords of wicked men
> To turn their own points on their master's bosom:
> . . . . . .
> Come, sirs, convey me to the block of shame;
> Wrong hath but wrong, and blame the due of blame."

The remaining four scenes of this play alternate between Richmond, young, enterprising, and hopeful, and Richard III., suspicious, and finally conscience-stricken, though never long actually terrified. Shakespeare's

sympathies are completely with Richmond, the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth, to whom as far as is known the poet was a most loyal subject. Richmond's first address to his followers after landing in England is spirited and encouraging, but indicates nothing of this prince's real character, which was cold and selfish:

> "Fellows in arms, and my most loving friends,
> Bruis'd underneath the yoke of tyranny,
> Thus far into the bowels of the land
> Have we march'd on without impediment:
> And here receive we from our father Stanley
> Lines of fair comfort and encouragement."

He then describes Richard as "the boar," a name often given him by his foes, and Richmond naturally expects he will be more and more joined by Richard's followers, but in this hope he is for some time rather disappointed. Many kings committing far less crimes than those laid to the charge of Richard III. were abandoned by their horrified, alienated subjects. But Richard, strange to say, was by no means so generally detested or cast off as he deserved to be. The triumph of the York faction, of which he had been the hero, had firmly established him in the respect of most Englishmen, and some of the chief nobility obeyed him to the last. This period was no time for popular demonstration of any kind, and the fate of England lay entirely between two rival princes. In Shakespeare's brief sketch of young Richmond, he seems a brave, high-spirited, generous deliverer of England from a cruel tyrant; but in reality he seems to have been a shrewd, avaricious, unamiable prince, who never was popular, or deserved to be, among the nation he ruled. All that Shakespeare makes him say seems more intended for stage effect than to convey historic truth about him. The chief interest of the play is always in Richard himself, and the next scene after Richmond's first appearance is on the eventful field of Bosworth, where Richard is now attended by the Duke of Norfolk, his son Lord Surrey, and others. Norfolk and Surrey are at present his chief attendants, though he seems always more confidential

with Catesby and Ratcliff. Richard again displays that wonderful energy and intrepid spirit, mingled with suspicion, which always distinguishes him, and exclaims to those around:

> "Here pitch our tents, even here in Bosworth Field.
> My Lord of Surrey, why look you so sad?"

Surrey, who probably, like many of Richard's followers, now feels anything but cheerful, evasively answers the trying question:

> "My heart is ten times lighter than my looks,"

and Richard then addresses Surrey's father Norfolk in the same anxious, if not suspicious manner, as if trying to discover their secret thoughts or feelings:

> "Norfolk, we must have knocks; ha! must we not?"

Norfolk, apparently not in the best of spirits, practically replies, with a sort of resignation:

> "We must both give and take, my gracious lord."

Richard, between these two adherents, hitherto not very much in his confidence, apparently tries to keep up their spirits, but in the effort for the first time reveals some apprehension, though never actual fear about the near future. He boldly exclaims to his attendants:

> "Up with my tent! here will I lie to-night."

Then an awful thought strikes him, though only for a moment, and he adds as if to himself:

> "But where to-morrow?"

Again rousing himself he proceeds:

> "Well, all's one for that.
> Who hath descried the number of our foe?"

Norfolk replies:

> "Six or seven thousand is their utmost power,"

and Richard confidently answers:

> "Why, our battalia trebles that account:
> Besides, the king's name is a tower of strength,"

and he exclaims with all his wonted energy:

"Up with my tent there! Valiant gentlemen,
Let us survey the vantage of the field
Call for some men of sound direction:
Let's want no discipline, make no delay;
For lord's, to-morrow is a busy day."

In these words the high spirits and constant courage of the hero in the former civil war re-appear, but his position is greatly changed. No longer the daring champion of his father's family and of his brother's cause, he has now become the foe of many among their adherents, united against him with their former enemies of the Lancastrian faction. Yet Richard's indomitable valour and energy hitherto support him in every emergency. The executions of alienated adherents, the alliance of former friends and foes against him alone, the increasing hatred with which he is now viewed throughout England, never depress him, and he seems to regret nothing. He is as before the hero of his cause, never shrinks, never repents, never delays, while pursuing his daring, ferocious designs. He still animates those followers who begin to evince some doubt or apprehension in his service, for Norfolk and Surrey become devoted to him, and their suspected fears or nervousness practically yield before their king's resolute spirit. The next scene introduces Richmond and his followers, also preparing for the coming battle. Richmond exclaims in the poet's beautiful language, which he probably would never have used or perhaps admired:

"The weary sun hath made a golden set,
And by the bright track of his fiery car,
Gives tokens of a goodly day to-morrow."

He asks where Lord Stanley is quartered, and evidently reckons much on this nobleman's desertion to him, still delayed by his son being a hostage in Richard's power. Richmond concludes this scene, saying:

"Give me some ink and paper in my tent:
I'll draw the form and model of our battle,
Limit each leader to his several charge,
And part in just proportion our small power."

In the next scene Richard appears with Norfolk, Catesby, and Ratcliff. He begins to feel some bodily if not mental fatigue. Though undaunted as ever, his immense energy is somewhat diminishing, as he himself admits. It may be that the fearful excitement of the present time, the loss of his first useful adherent, Buckingham, the sudden appearance of young Richmond in England like an avenging angel, his suspicion of Stanley and others—all these various causes of alarm, regret, and danger are at length beginning to weaken the daring spirit of his certainly heroic nature. In addition to Catesby and Ratcliff, always more his obedient satellites than familiar advisers, Richard is at present attended by new confidants—Norfolk, Surrey, and Northumberland, who though men of the highest rank and influence, seem less intimate with him, and were never so much in his favour as Buckingham. Richard at present trusts Catesby and Ratcliff more than any of these noblemen. He asks Catesby if all his armour is ready in his tent, and being told it is, tells Norfolk to be off to his charge, to

"Use careful watch; choose trusty sentinels."

and to

"Stir with the lark"

the next morning. When Norfolk departs, Richard is alone with Catesby and Ratcliff, with whom he is always most intimate, and says to the latter:

"Send out a pursuivant at arms
To Stanley's regiment; bid him bring his power
Before sun-rising, lest his son George fall
Into the blind cave of eternal night.
Fill me a bowl of wine. Give me a watch."

Then to Catesby:

"Saddle white Surrey for the field to-morrow.
Look that my staves be sound and not too heavy."

Catesby says nothing, but Richard, knowing he can thoroughly trust him, then addresses Ratcliff, whom, like Catesby, he can well use as a spy:

"Saw'st thou the melancholy Lord Northumberland?"

Ratcliff replies:

"Thomas, the earl of Surrey, and himself,
Much about cock-shut time, from troop to troop
Went through the army, cheering up the soldiers.'

Richard, relieved at this news from his observant follower, on whom he can thoroughly rely, replies:

"So; I am satisfied. Give me a bowl of wine."

Evidently feeling weaker, and quite confidential with his two followers, he admits, what he probably never said before in all his eventful life:

"I have not that alacrity of spirit,
Nor cheer of mind, that I was wont to have."

One of them evidently approaches with the wine, and he adds:

"Set it down."

and then asks:

"Is ink and paper ready?"

Ratcliff:

"It is, my lord."

Richard rejoins:

"Bid my guard watch; leave me."

Then calling him again, he says:

"Ratcliff, about the mid of night come to my tent
And help to arm me."

and repeats to both:

"Leave me, I say."

The king retires into his tent, while Catesby and Ratcliff depart. The next scene brings Stanley in the night-time secretly to Richmond, who warmly greets him. Stanley then tells him how he intends to act, longing to join him at once, but afraid to do so, owing to his son George being in Richard's power. Stanley exclaims:

"The silent hours steal on,
And flaky darkness breaks within the east.
In brief, for so the season bids us be,
Prepare thy battle early in the morning,
. . . . . .

I, as I may, (that which I would I cannot),
With best advantage will deceive the time,
And aid thee in this doubtful shock of arms:
But on thy side I may not be too forward,
Lest, being seen, thy brother, tender George,
Be executed in his father's sight.
Farewell; the leisure and the fearful time
Cuts off the ceremonious vows of love
And ample interchange of sweet discourse,
. . . . . .
Once more, adieu: be valiant and speed well!"

He departs, attended by Richmond's officers, who when alone, contemplating the next day's battle upon which the fate of England depends, utters a beautiful prayer, well worthy of Shakespeare, but which Richmond would scarcely have composed, if history is to be trusted, though it may be hoped its sentiments on this occasion may have inspired him:

"O! Thou, whose captain I account myself,
Look on my forces with a gracious eye:
Put in their hands Thy bruising irons of wrath,
That they may crush down with a heavy fall
The usurping helmets of our adversaries.
Make us Thy ministers of chastisement,
That we may praise Thee in Thy victory!
To Thee I do commend my watchful soul,
Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes:
Sleeping and waking, O! defend me still." [*Sleeps.*

The scene reverts to show the contrast to the tent of Richard, who also asleep sees the ghosts of his victims rise before him in succession. They alike reproach him, while hoping for and some predicting his defeat next day; then, turning to Richmond, they sweeten his repose with good wishes and promises of success. The whole scene is eminently fitted for the stage, where the tents of the two princes can be represented as near together, while the apparitions address them with blessings and maledictions alternately. The ghost of the brave young Prince Edward of Lancaster first appears, exclaiming to Richard:

"Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-morrow!
Think how thou stabb'dst me in my prime of youth
At Tewksbury: despair therefore, and die!"

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then addressing Richmond:

"Be cheerful, Richmond; for the wronged souls
Of butcher'd princes fight in thy behalf;
King Henry's issue, Richmond, comforts thee."

The ghosts of King Henry VI., Rivers, Vaughan, Grey, Hastings, then of the two little princes, and of the Lady Anne, appear in regular order from the dates of their several deaths, all alike pronouncing maledictions on Richard and blessings on Richmond. Last of all arises that of Buckingham, exclaiming emphatically:

"The first was I that help'd thee to the crown;
The last was I that felt thy tyranny,
O! in the battle think on Buckingham,
And die in terror of thy guiltiness.
Dream on, dream on, of bloody deeds and death,
Fainting despair, despairing, yield thy breath."

then to Richmond:

"I died for hope ere I could lend thee aid:
But cheer thy heart, and be thou not dismay'd:
God and good angels fight on Richmond's side;
And Richard falls in height of all his pride."

[*The ghosts vanish, and Richard starts out of his dream.*

Richard's fearless spirit for the first time, though not for long, seems to know what real terror is. The weakening influence of dreams has somewhat the same effect on him as on Lady Macbeth. Like her he can defy all the dangers of reality, and is utterly remorseless, while his imagination is not disturbed. The power of conscience unknown to, or overcome by them both while awake, can yet assail them with new, irresistible force when asleep, or in dreamy oblivion. Richard first thinks himself wounded in battle, and exclaims wildly:

"Give me another horse! bind up my wounds!"

then utters his first attempt at a prayer:

"Have mercy, Jesu!"

then wakes thoroughly, and, remembering where he is, says:

"Soft! I did but dream,"

and immediately reproaches his conscience, which only a dream could awaken,

"O! coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me,"

then recalling and examining all his surroundings, proceeds in a gloomy soliloquy, partly terrified and partly confused:

"The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What! Do I fear myself? there's none else by:
Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
. . . . . .
I am a villain. Yet I lie; I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well; fool, do not flatter.
. . . . . .
I shall despair. There is no creature loves me."

Yet at the moment he utters these desperate words, he must know that thousands of brave Englishmen are in arms around him to fight for his cause, but in his gloomy distraction he proceeds:

"And if I die, no soul shall pity me:

These words he could scarcely have thought true, as he still retained a number of devoted followers about to risk their lives for him. Richard III., despite all his crimes, real or alleged, had no cause to complain of his subjects, as he was never abandoned by them, like some of his predecessors and successors were, and for far less reason. He ends his terrible soliloquy with a gloomy foreboding:

"Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd
Came to my tent; and every one did threat
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard."

The effect of his fearful dream appears when Ratcliff, like Catesby, always alert and ready, enters, announcing that his men are buckling on their armour for the coming battle. Richard in thorough confidence exclaims:

"O Ratcliff! I have dream'd a fearful dream.
What thinkest thou, will our friends prove all true!"

Ratcliff, as firm and resolute as when sternly directing the executions of Richard's prisoners, almost scornfully replies:

"Nay, good my lord, be not afraid of shadows,"

But this advice is easier to give than to follow. The "shadows" now tormenting Richard's mind are no idle fancies without foundation, but terrific reminders not even exaggerated of his criminal deeds at a time when under the influence of sleep his wonted energies are unable to repel them. Yet he tries to again rouse his spirits by comparing his dreamy fancies with realities which his bravery despises, and he exclaims:

> "By the apostle Paul, shadows to-night
> Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
> Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
> Armed in proof, and led by shallow Richmond.
> It is not yet near day."

Then, as if rather encouraged by the firmness of his resolute follower, he adds:

> "Come, go with me;
> Under our tents I'll play the eaves-dropper,
> To hear if any mean to shrink from me."

He departs with Ratcliff, who probably thinks that Richard has only been dreaming of desertion among his army, while in Richmond's tent, Lord Oxford [1] and others of his adherents enter, to whom he says, in complete contrast to Richard, that he has enjoyed:

> "The sweetest sleep, and fairest-boding dreams
> That ever enter'd in a drowsy head."

The ghosts of his foe's victims have in fact thoroughly cheered Richmond, and he addresses his officers in spirited words, ending:

> "Remember this,
> . . . . . .
> The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls,
> Like high-rear'd bulwarks, stand before our faces;
> Richard except, those whom we fight against
> Had rather have us win than him they follow.
> For what is he they follow? truly, gentlemen,
> A bloody tyrant and a homicide;
> . . . . . .
> A base foul stone, made precious by the foil
> Of England's chair, where he is falsely set;
> . . . . . .
> Advance your standards, draw your willing swords."

[1] This nobleman is probably the same whom Scott introduces in "Anne of Geierstein."

It would seem Richmond was mistaken in apparently expecting Richard's followers to abandon him; as for a time the battle of Bosworth was fiercely contested and many Englishmen of distinction were killed on both sides; but after his encouraging words Richmond departs for the field with his men, and Richard attended by Ratcliff and others now appears. The king, always trusting Ratcliff begins to doubt Northumberland, and asks the former:

"What said Northumberland as touching Richmond?"

Ratcliff answers:

"That he was never trained up in arms."

Richard is pleased and asks what Surrey then said. Ratcliff replies that Surrey smiled and exclaimed:

"The better for our purpose."

This news from the trusted Ratcliff satisfies Richard, who was evidently suspicious about the loyalty of the two noblemen, and he says as a clock strikes:

"Tell the clock there. Give me a calendar."

and asks:

"Who saw the sun to-day?"

Ratcliff:

"Not I, my lord."

Richard, beginning to have vague superstitious fears which he is unable to conceal, exclaims:

"Then he disdains to shine; for by the book
He should have brav'd the east an hour ago:
A black day will it be to somebody."

He seems to mutter these last words to himself, as he then exclaims:

"Ratcliff!
The sun will not be seen to-day;
The sky doth frown and lour upon our army."

Then as if yielding more and more to an apprehensive dread quite new to him, exclaims:

"I would these dewy tears were from the ground."

Again rousing himself as if ashamed of showing fears before Ratcliff, he says:

> "Not shine to-day! Why, what is that to me
> More than to Richmond? for the self-same heaven
> That frowns on me looks sadly upon him.'

These strange apprehensions caused by dark or gloomy weather alone, at such a time of ardent excitement, seem hardly consistent with Richard's intrepid spirit and shrewdness. Their power over him is likely owing partly to the effect of his fearful dreams the night before. His brave spirit seems, however, even now more confused and agitated than really frightened, in the common sense of the word.[1] The dread of death or idea of flight never occurs to him; he has become fanciful if not dreamy, perhaps superstitious, but neither terrified nor remorseful; and seems indeed to regain more spirit and courage as he recovers from the immediate effect of his terrible dream. Thus when Norfolk enters, saying:

> "Arm, arm, my lord! the foe vaunts in the field,"

the exciting news instantly arouses Richard, who exclaims with his wonted animation:

> "Come, bustle, bustle; caparison my horse.
> Call up Lord Stanley, bid him bring his power,
> And thus my battle shall be ordered."

He then arranges the order of his troops how they are to follow him in the field, and seems recovering his former self every moment when Norfolk shows him a scroll he has found in his tent with these ominous words as if urging Norfolk to desert. Richard immediately reads out the words:

> "Jockey of Norfolk, be not too bold,
> For Dickon thy master is bought and sold."

He sees their meaning at once, exclaiming:

> "A thing devised by the enemy."

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[1] "Richard had also a proud and cruel mind, which never went from him to the day of his death, while he had rather suffer by the cruel sword, though all his company did forsake him, than by shameful flight he would favour his life."—More's "Life of Richard III."

Then quitting the subject he says:

"Go, gentlemen; every man to his charge,"

and evidently reasoning with himself as well as others, proceeds, becoming bolder and bolder at the approach of battle:

"Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;
Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devised at first to keep the strong in awe:
Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law."

He then scornfully ridicules as well as abuses Richmond's army, saying to his men:

"Remember whom you are to cope withal;
A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways,
A scum of Bretagnes and base lackey peasants,
. . . . . .
Let's whip these stragglers o'er the seas again:
. . . . . .
Hark! I hear their drum.
Fight, gentlemen of England! fight, bold yeomen!
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head!
Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood;
Amaze the welkin with your broken staves!"

Then he asks a messenger:

"What says Lord Stanley? will he bring his power?"

Messenger:

"My lord, he doth deny to come."

Richard ferociously exclaims:

"Off with his son George's head!"

when Norfolk, probably willing to save the hostage, says:

"My lord, the enemy is pass'd the marsh:
After the battle let George Stanley die."

Richard, happily diverted from his savage purpose by this news, and roused to fierce energy at hearing of the enemy's approach, forgets Stanley, and exclaims, recalling the valour of his race:

"A thousand hearts are great within my bosom:
Advance our standards! set upon our foes!
Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,
Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons!
Upon them! Victory sits on our helms."

With these inspiriting, confident words he rushes to the battle, and in the next short scene the Duke of Norfolk enters, followed by Catesby, the latter ever faithful to Richard, whom he certainly admires, exclaiming as if fearing Norfolk is not as zealous as himself:

"Rescue, my Lord of Norfolk! rescue, rescue!
The king enacts more wonders than a man,
Daring an opposite to every danger:
His horse is slain, and all on foot he fights,
Seeking for Richmond in the throat of death.
Rescue, fair lord, or else the day is lost!"

The slain horse is probably white Surrey, whose pretended death by a real horse was often seen on the London stage, but not of late years. Norfolk evidently departs at Catesby's summons, when Richard himself enters on foot, apparently almost desperate, yet fearless as ever. It was said that some of Richmond's followers wore armour like their leader, as if to guard him from the fury of his certainly more martial foe. Thus Richard wildly exclaims to Catesby, who alone seems to hear him:

"A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse."

Catesby, always ready and practical, replies:

"Withdraw, my lord; I'll help you to a horse."

Richard hearing his voice at this awful moment seems to hardly quite recognise his devoted follower. Roused almost to madness, apprehending immediate death, yet never fearing it, he exclaims in resolute desperation not unmingled with savage triumph:

"Slave! I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die.
I think there be six Richmonds in the field;
Five have I slain to-day instead of him.
A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!"

The next and last scene seems well fitted as well as probably intended for theatrical effect, being a thoroughly dramatic end of this exciting eventful play. Though Shakespeare represents the rival princes encountering each other in mortal strife, it seems historically doubtful if they ever came to blows, and the poet therefore presents

them first as fighting and withdrawing, and then Richmond enters with Stanley and other followers announcing Richard's death. This king, a trained and proved warrior, "in close fight a champion grim," as Scott describes Marmion, would have very likely been beyond Richmond's power to cope with on anything like equal terms. Richard doubtless partly exhausted by his desperate heroism on this terrible day, was evidently slain by more than one of Richmond's followers.[1] Sir William, brother to Lord Stanley, bringing a small crown worn by Richard in the battle, presents it to Richmond, exclaiming in exultation:

> "Lo! here, this long-usurped royalty
> From the dead temples of this bloody wretch
> Have I pluck'd off to grace thy brows withal:
> Wear it, enjoy it, and make much of it."

Richmond's adherents now surround their new king, congratulating themselves and him on this decisive victory. Norfolk, Ratcliff, and Brakenbury were among the slain, and some three or four thousand of Richard's men, proving that this tyrant, instead of being generally deserted, as many better kings have been, was obeyed and faithfully followed to the last. While Hume and Sir Thomas More agree with the poet's account of Richard III., the calm, discerning mind of Bacon admits more in his favour, and some recent writers have also somewhat vindicated his character, but the evidence of history on the whole appears certainly more against him than for him.[2] Richmond in eloquent words, due

[1] "The intrepid tyrant cast his eye around the field, and descrying his rival at no great distance, he drove against him with fury. He was soon within reach of Richmond himself, who declined not the combat, when Stanley breaking in with his troops surrounded Richard, who, fighting bravely to the last moment, was overwhelmed by numbers and perished."—Hume's "History," chap. xxiii.

[2] Bacon declares that Richard was a prince "in military virtue approved, jealous of the honour of the English nation, and likewise a good law-maker for the ease and solace of the common people, yet his cruelties in the opinion of all men weighed down his virtues and his merits."—"Life of Henry VII."

chiefly to Shakespeare, praises and thanks his adherents on the battle-field of Bosworth, generously exclaiming:

> "Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled
> That in submission will return to us;
> And then, as we have ta'en the sacrament,
> We will unite the white rose and the red:"

indicating his approaching marriage with the princess Elizabeth, and the new monarch Henry VII., concludes with noble words of Shakespeare's invention, yet which it may be hoped expressed the real king's meaning:

> "Smile heaven upon this fair conjunction,
> That long hath frown'd upon their enmity!
> O! now, let Richmond and Elizabeth,
> The true succeeders of each royal house,
> By God's fair ordinance conjoin together;
> And let their heirs, (God, if Thy will be so),
> Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
> With smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days!"

Though Richmond evidently acted with clemency towards his defeated foes, the guilty Catesby, "a great instrument of Richard's crimes,"[1] yet the "good Catesby," as his patron Richard calls him, was executed after the battle at Leicester, while the fact of so many men of all ranks being slain fighting for Richard's cause, practically contradicts Richard's gloomy idea in his awful soliloquy that no creature loved him. In reality he was never generally abandoned like his predecessors King John and Richard II., or his distant successor James II., who at length had to rely on the Irish against his English and Scottish subjects united to depose him. Richard III. evidently had always some brave adherents, much like Henry VI. and Charles I., who, though finally vanquished, had thousands of devoted loyal subjects to the last.[2] It is possible, there-

[1] Hume.

[2] "Yet probably the loyalty of such men as Catesby and Ratcliff to Richard III. was owing to much the same cause as that of the hangman, Tristan, and his subordinates to Louis XI. of France, who admits: "We have resolved to live or die with your majesty, knowing we shall have as short breath to draw when you are gone as ever fell to the lot of any of our patients."—Scott's "Quentin Durward," chap. xxviii.

fore, that Shakespeare's sketch of Richard makes him to some extent a worse man than he really was, and this idea is suggested by the strange, inexplicable success with which he is described as deceiving even his most intimate friends and relations as to his real nature and designs. (Throughout the greater part of the play this terrible prince mingles freely with his fellow-men of high and low degree, deceiving his two elder brothers as completely as if they had been always total strangers to him. Nearly all the princes, statesmen, and chief men of England he deals with seem mistaken and unsuspicious about him. He wins them over in succession to serve his purposes, and not till he has become king does he seem to convince the English nation of his true character. The grand eloquent words of Henry VII. after the battle, on the whole, agree with Bacon's calm, prosaic version:)

"The king immediately after the victory caused "Te Deum Laudamus," to be solemnly sung in the presence of the whole army upon the place and was himself with general applause and great cries of joy, in a kind of military election, or recognition, saluted king."[1]

[1] "Life of Henry VII."

KING HENRY VIII.

THE intermediate reign of Henry VII., never described by Shakespeare, leaves an unexamined space between Richard III.'s reign and that of Henry VIII. when the poet resumes and ends his noble series of dramatic chronicles, as Hallam terms the historical plays. Shakespeare ending Richard III., leaves Henry VII. triumphant on Bosworth field, making noble use of the victory, pardoning defeated foes as well as rewarding faithful followers. The poet thus represents him as a welcome, delightful contrast to the terrible tyrant slain before him. Yet it would seem that Shakespeare's slight sketch of Richmond is far more favourable than his subsequent history justifies when Henry VII. His reign witnessed more than one rebellion against his evidently unpopular rule, and the execution of Sir William Stanley, the zealous adherent who had crowned him, for subsequent revolt, seems a most remarkable proof of the terrible changes in men's minds during civil wars or rebellions, and of the strange ingratitude of which rulers are capable even when not by nature particularly cruel. Henry VII. never showed the murderous spirit of King John, or the ferocity of Richard III., but usually cold, selfish, and crafty when he thought himself in danger, he was utterly implacable. The execution of Stanley, once a most loyal subject, for joining a revolt against a king whose life he was said to have saved, Bacon relates in his calm, peculiar style:

"The condition of mortal men is not capable of a greater benefit than the king received at the hands of

Stanley, being, like the benefits of Christ, at once to save and crown."[1]

While Hume thoughtfully, if not sarcastically, writes on this extraordinary case:

"Princes are often apt to regard great services as a ground of jealousy. And as Stanley was one of the most opulent subjects in the kingdom, the prospects of so rich a forfeiture was deemed no small motive for Henry's proceedings to extremities against him."[2]

The fate of Stanley, the revolts of Warbeck and Simnel, the execution of the unfortunate young Lord Warwick, besides other important events in Henry VII.'s reign, would have made it a most interesting subject for Shakespeare, but for some unknown reason he ignored it, and passes from the death of Richard III. to the reign of Henry VIII. This prince, the only surviving son of Henry VII., ascended the English throne in the midst of profound peace, undisturbed, unchecked, and troubled by no opponent or rival. Yet few, if any, English reigns were more saddened by state executions, chiefly among the nobility, while with the lower classes, this almost despotic king was actually a popular sovereign. In the solemn Prologue to this play, which some think written by Shakespeare's great contemporary Ben Jonson,[3] yet which is much in Shakespeare's style, readers are prepared for its contents, without either blame or praise being attributed to any of its personages. It is certainly full of compassion for all the distinguished and unfortunate victims of Henry's extraordinary reign.

> "Think ye see
> The very persons of our noble story
> As they were living, think you see them great
> And followed with the general throng and sweat
> Of thousand friends; then in a moment see
> How soon this mightiness meets misery!"

Bacon describes the beginning of Henry's reign as "one of the fairest mornings of a kingdom that hath been known in this land." This magnificent and stately play, however,

[1] "Life of Henry VII." [2] "History of England," vol. iii.
[3] See note, Howard Staunton's edition.

begins several years after the king's accession, and its first scene is in London, at the palace, where some English nobles describe their late stay in France, where king Francis I. had received Henry on a state visit.

Their gorgeous meeting, called the Field of the Cloth of Gold, was partly arranged or brought about by Cardinal Wolsey, at this time high in favour with both kings, trusted by Henry and complimented by Francis. The description of the English and French meeting on most friendly terms, after centuries of national enmity, the Duke of Norfolk relates in Shakespeare's grand words, which may well, however, convey his own ideas or recollections. Norfolk, a relative of Richard's adherent slain at Bosworth, now says to the Duke of Buckingham, son of Richard's victim, and who was prevented by illness from visiting France:

> "Then you lost
> The view of earthly glory: men might say,
> Till this time pomp was single, but now married
> To one above itself. Each following day
> Became the next day's master, till the last
> Made former wonders its. To-day the French
> All clinquant, all in gold, like heathen gods,
> Shone down the English; and to-morrow they
> Made Britain India: every man that stood
> Show'd like a mine. . . .
> . . . . . .
> The two kings,
> Equal in lustre, were now best, now worst,
> As presence did present them: him in eye,
> Still him in praise: and, being present both,
> 'Twas said they saw but one: . . .
> . . . . . .
> All was royal;
> To the disposing of it nought rebell'd,
> Order gave each thing view; the office did
> Distinctly his full function. . . .
> . . . . . .
> All this was order'd by the good discretion
> Of the right reverend Cardinal of York."

At mention of the cardinal, his opponent in the king's favour, Buckingham, always more impetuous and fiery than his artful, plotting father, irritably exclaims:

> "The devil speed him! no man's pie is freed
> From his ambitious finger. What had he
> To do in these fierce vanities?"

The jealous enmity between the cardinal and Buckingham is well known to Norfolk, who, siding with the latter, now makes an admirably descriptive reply. Though he, like many of the English nobility, dislikes or envies the lowly-born, ambitious, arrogant cardinal, yet Norfolk has sense enough to acknowledge his great qualities, evidently remembering that he himself, and Buckingham, owe more of their greatness to ancestry than to themselves. He therefore answers:

> "Surely, sir,
> There's in him stuff that puts him to these ends;
> For,—being not propp'd by ancestry, whose grace
> Chalks successors their way, nor call'd upon
> For high feats done to the crown; neither allied
> To eminent assistants; but, spider-like,
> Out of his self-drawing web, he gives us note,
> The force of his own merit makes his way;
> A gift that heaven gives for him, which buys
> A place next to the king."

The other courtiers have not the patience, sense, or inclination to appreciate the merits of the formidable cardinal, complaining that the cost of this gorgeous celebration in France had weighed heavily on some of the English gentry, and Buckingham adds:

> "O! many
> Have broke their backs with laying manors on 'em
> For this great journey. What did this vanity
> But minister communication of
> A most poor issue?"

Norfolk, assenting, replies:

> "Grievingly I think,
> The peace between the French and us not values
> The cost that did conclude it."

Buckingham, still moodily thinking of the cardinal, observes:

> "Why all this business
> Our reverend cardinal carried."

Norfolk, apparently more calm and observant than the others, then warns the imprudent Buckingham:

> "The state takes notice of the private difference
> Betwixt you and the cardinal. I advise you,
> And take it from a heart that wishes towards you
> Honour and plenteous safety, that you read

The cardinal's malice and his potency
Together; to consider further that
What his high hatred would effect wants not
A minister in his power. You know his nature,
That he's revengeful; and I know his sword
Hath a sharp edge; it's long, and 't may be said,
It reaches far; and where 't will not extend,
Thither he darts it."

As swords are not worn by cardinals, these mysterious words must mean that Wolsey will use his influence over the king with fatal effect against Buckingham. Norfolk concludes, seeing Wolsey approaching:

"Bosom up my counsel,
You'll find it wholesome. Lo! where comes that rock
That I advise your shunning."

These words announce Wolsey's entrance, and he and Buckingham look at one another with mutual disdain, and hardly-concealed animosity. Wolsey speaks first, addressing his secretary, accompanying him:

"The Duke of Buckingham's surveyor, ha?
Where's his examination?"

First secretary:

"Here, so please you."

Wolsey:

"Is he in person ready?"

The secretary says he is, and Wolsey then utters these threatening words, which Buckingham either hears or suspects:

"Well, we shall then know more; and Buckingham
Shall lessen this big look."

Wolsey walks out leaving the assembled courtiers, while Buckingham's fiery temper, roused by Wolsey's parting look and manner, makes him exclaim, alluding to Wolsey's humble origin:

"This butcher's cur is venom-mouth'd, and I
Have not the power to muzzle him;"

and Norfolk, friendly to Buckingham and knowing his imprudence, asks:

"What! are you chaf'd?
Ask God for temperance; that's the appliance only
Which your disease requires,"

Buckingham passionately exclaims:

> "I read in's looks
> Matter against me; and his eye revil'd
> Me, as his abject object: at this instant
> He bores me with some trick; he's gone to the king;
> I'll follow and outstare him."

Norfolk, alarmed and anxious for his friend's safety replies:

> "Stay, my lord,
> And let your reason with your choler question
> What 'tis you go about. . . .
> . . . . . .
> Not a man in England
> Can advise me like you: be to yourself
> As you would to your friend."

Buckingham, too angry to listen to reason, exclaims:

> "I'll to the king;
> And from a mouth of honour quite cry down
> This Ipswich fellow's insolence, or proclaim
> There's difference in no persons."

His wiser friend again cautions him:

> "Be advis'd;
> Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot
> That it do singe yourself . . . .
> . . . . . .
> I say again, there is no English soul
> More stronger to direct you than yourself,
> If with the sap of reason you would quench,
> Or but allay the fire of passion."

Buckingham, as if touched by this compliment to his usual good sense, replies:

> "Sir,
> I am thankful to you, and I'll go along
> By your prescription;"

and proceeds to charge Wolsey with various political intrigues with France and Germany, which he thinks amount to something like treason against the king, when interrupted by the entrance of the king's officers bearing a warrant for his immediate arrest on the fearful charge of high treason. Buckingham suspecting treachery, and

likely knowing his own imprudent habits of talking, gives up hope at once, and exclaims to Norfolk:

> " Lo you, my lord,
> The net has fall'n upon me! I shall perish
> Under device and practice . . . .
> . . . . . .
> It will help me nothing
> To plead mine innocence . . . .
> . . . . . .
> I obey."

He is then arrested with Lord Abergavenny, and when he hears that other arrests are to follow, exclaims:

> " My surveyor is false; the o'er great cardinal
> Hath show'd him gold. My life is spann'd already;
> I am the shadow of poor Buckingham.
> . . . . . .
> . . . . my lord, farewell."

They are taken to the Tower, and the next scene introduces the king thanking Wolsey for his able discovery of Buckingham's alleged plot against both his crown and life. Buckingham's surveyor seems the chief witness against him in this mysterious affair.[1]

Throughout this play Shakespeare is certainly more favourable to the king than most historians are. The poet apparently thinks Buckingham innocent, and that Henry is set against him by the cardinal. The king therefore thus thanks Wolsey:

> " My life itself, and the best heart of it,
> Thanks you for this great care: I stood i' the level
> Of a full-charged confederacy, and give thanks
> To you that choked it. Let be called before us
> That gentleman of Buckingham's; in person
> I'll hear him his confessions justify;
> And point by point the treasons of his master
> He shall again relate."

---

[1] " He (Buckingham) seems to have been a man full of levity and rash projects and entertained a converse with a friar, who encouraged him in the notion of his mounting the throne of England. He had not even abstained from threats against the king's life. As Buckingham's crimes seem to proceed more from indiscretion than deliberate malice, the people who loved him expected that the king would grant him a pardon, and imputed their disappointment to the animosity and revenge of the cardinal. The king's own jealousy, however, was alone sufficient to render him implacable."—Hume's " History," chap. xxviii.

Henry, with the cardinal and some noblemen, take their seats, when Queen Katharine of Aragon is announced and enters. This Spanish princess, widow of the king's brother, Prince Arthur, is older than Henry, and is represented in this play as a noble and interesting character. Shakespeare describes her, and afterwards Anne Boleyn, her young rival, in a way that would have gratified both these ladies, though whether they and their friends would have quite sanctioned each other's description may be doubted. They are each made so attractive and interesting by the poet, that it would be difficult to say which of them Shakespeare really prefers.

When Katharine enters, she first pleads with the king for a remission of taxation, about to be levied throughout the kingdom, for the imposition of which the cardinal was generally blamed, though whether justly or not may be a matter of opinion, considering the imperious obstinacy of the king. Shakespeare, however, represents Henry as ignorant and indignant about this proposed taxation, but history, according to some sources, represents him as responsible for it as Wolsey.[1] Katharine, aided by Norfolk, protests against the new taxation on behalf of the king's subjects. Their discontent is vividly described by Norfolk in appealing to the king:

> "Upon these taxations,
> The clothiers all, not able to maintain
> The many to them 'longing, have put off
> The spinsters, carders, fullers, weavers, who,

---

[1] "Henry determined to fill his treasury by imposition upon his own subjects, and he followed, as is believed, the counsel of Wolsey. But he soon found that he had presumed too far on the passive submission of his subjects. These arbitrary impositions being imputed, though on what grounds is unknown, to the counsels of the cardinal increased the general odium under which he laboured."—Hume's "History," chap. xxix.

"Buried indeed as both Henry and his minister (Wolsey) were in schemes of distant ambition, the sudden and general resistance of England woke them to an uneasy consciousness that their dream of uncontrolled authority was yet to find hindrances in the temper of the people they ruled."—Green's "History of the English People," Book V., chap. iij.

Unfit for other life, compell'd by hunger
And lack of other means, in desperate manner
Daring the event to the teeth, are all in uproar,
And danger serves among them."

Henry, in real or assumed surprise, asks:

"Taxation!
Wherein? and what taxation? My lord cardinal,
You that are blamed for it alike with us,
Know you of this taxation?"

Wolsey protests he knows no more about it than others, when Katharine, who likes him not, exclaims with suppressed indignation:

"No, my lord,
You know no more than others; but you frame
Things that are known alike; which are not wholesome
To those which would not know them, and yet must
Perforce be their acquaintance. These exactions,
Whereof my sovereign would have note, they are
Most pestilent to the hearing; and to bear 'em,
The back is sacrifice to the load. They say
They are devised by you, or else you suffer
Too hard an exclamation."

Henry exclaims, as if ignorant and wishing to be informed:

"Still exaction!
The nature of it? In what kind, let's know
Is this exaction?"

Katharine, afraid to provoke the violent king, yet anxious he should know, meekly answers:

"I am much too venturous
In tempting of your patience; but am bolden'd
Under your promised pardon. The subjects' grief
Comes through commissions, which compel from each
The sixth part of his substance, to be levied
Without delay; . . . I would your highness
Would give it quick consideration, for
There is no primer business."

Henry, as if he had never heard of this taxing before, exclaims indignantly:

"By my life
This is against our pleasure."

Wolsey then evidently feels he must defend himself from

the accusation against him, and says, with calmness, perhaps craft, yet likely with some truth:

> "And for me
> I have no further gone in this than by
> A single voice, and that not pass'd me but
> By learned approbation of the judges. If I am
> Traduc'd by ignorant tongues, which neither know
> My faculties nor person, yet will be
> The chronicles of my doing, let me say
> 'Tis but the fate of place, and the rough brake
> That virtue must go through. We must not stint
> Our necessary actions, in the fear
> To cope malicious censurers; . . .
> . . . . . .
> If we shall stand still,
> In fear our motion will be mock'd or carp'd at,
> We shall take root here where we sit, or sit
> State-statues only."

Henry then says with that apparent open frankness, which usually convinced or satisfied his hearers:

> "Things done well,
> And with a care, exempt themselves from fear;
> Things done without example, in their issue
> Are to be feared."

He inquires, as if in complete ignorance:

> "Have you a precedent
> Of this commission? I believe, not any,"

and then, like a lover of constitutional freedom, continues:

> "We must not rend our subjects from our laws,
> And stick them in our will. . . .
> . . . . . .
> To every county
> Where this is questioned send our letters, with
> Free pardon to each man that has denied
> The force of this commission. Pray look to it,
> I put it to your care."[1]

---

[1] "Henry, proud and self-willed as he was, shrank not without reason from a conflict with the roused spirit of the nation. His conduct on this occasion well illustrates the whole policy of his House. The temper of the princes of that line was hot and their spirit high; but they understood the character of the nation which they governed, and never once, like some of their predecessors and some of their successors, carried obstinacy to a fatal point. The discretion of the Tudors was such that their power, though it was often resisted, was never subverted."—Macaulay's "History of England," chap. i.

Shakespeare now imputes conduct to Wolsey which may be true, but seems not proved. He privately says to the secretary:

> "Let there be letters writ to every shire,
> Of the king's grace and pardon. The grieved commons
> Hardly conceive of me; let it be noised
> That through our intercession this revokement
> And pardon comes."

According to historic probability, Henry knew as much of this taxation as Wolsey did, but the latter feared to say so. Henry evidently well understood the Englishmen of his time, and all the important measures of his ministers were probably approved of by him before they ever became law.[1] It was this extraordinary monarch's good fortune to be always popular throughout his reign, the blame of his worst acts being generally attributed to his unfortunate ministers, while he himself, usually joyous and frank in manner, enjoyed a reputation for noble generosity which many students of history cannot believe that he fully deserved.

After this discussion about England's taxation, Katharine next pleads with the king for Buckingham but with less success. His surveyor enters and Katharine addressing Henry says:

> "I am sorry that the Duke of Buckingham
> Is run in your displeasure."

The king replying, praises the unfortunate duke's high qualities in noble language, but keeps his fate a secret in his own mind.

> "It grieves many:
> The gentleman is learn'd, and a most rare speaker,
> To nature none more bound; his training such
> That he may furnish and instruct great teachers,
> And never seek for aid out of himself. . . .
> . . . . . .

[1] "He understood well that foul ways are not always passable. None of his predecessors understood the temper of Parliaments better than himself, or that prevailed himself more dexterously of them." Lord Herbert of Cherbury's "Life of Henry VIII.," p. 571.

> This man so complete,
> Who was enroll'd 'mongst wonders, and when we,
> Almost with ravish'd listening, could not find
> His hour of speech a minute; he, my lady,
> Hath into monstrous habits put the graces
> That once were his.
> . . . . . .
> Sit by us; you shall hear—
> (This was his gentleman in trust)—of him
> Things to strike honour sad. Bid him recount
> The fore-recited practices; whereof
> We cannot feel too little, hear too much."

Wolsey, perhaps seeing that the surveyor when thus appealed to feels uneasy in such a presence, gives him words of encouragement:

> "Stand forth; and with bold spirit relate what you,
> Most like a careful subject, have collected
> Out of the Duke of Buckingham."

King Henry graciously adds:

> "Speak freely."

The man thus emboldened proceeds with the charges against his unfortunate employer:

> "First, it was usual with him, every day
> It would infect his speech, that if the king
> Should without issue die, he'd carry it so
> To make the sceptre his; these very words
> I've heard him utter to his son-in-law,
> Lord Abergány, to whom by oath he menaced
> Revenge upon the cardinal."

Here Wolsey, always on the watch against his many foes, appeals to Henry:

> "Please your highness, note
> This dangerous conception in this point.
> Not friended by his wish, to your high person
> His will is most malignant; and it stretches
> Beyond you, to your friends."

Katharine, distrusting Wolsey, but unable to weaken his influence with the king, makes an appeal to the former:

> "My learn'd lord cardinal,
> Deliver all with charity."

Henry, as if impatient, asks the surveyor:

"Speak on:
How grounded he his title to the crown
Upon our fail? to this point hast thou heard him
At any time speak aught?"

and the surveyor replies that Buckingham was under the influence of his confessor, a Chartreux friar, named Hopkins,

"Who fed him every minute
With words of sovereignty."

This perhaps too willing witness then relates at length some apparently treasonable words uttered by the duke to himself, when the queen, as if examining his appearance, and suspecting enmity to his former employer, exclaims:

"If I know you well,
You were the duke's surveyor, and lost your office
On the complaint o' the tenants; take good heed
You charge not in your spleen a noble person
And spoil your nobler soul. I say, take heed;
Yes, heartily beseech you."

The king, as if irritated at her remarks, or anxious not to have the surveyor interrupted, checks her by saying:

"Let him on,"

and to the surveyor:

"Go forward."

The man, reassured by the evident favour of the king and Wolsey, confidently proceeds:

"On my soul, I'll speak but truth,
I told my lord the duke, by the devil's illusions
The monk might be deceived; and that 'twas dangerous for him
To ruminate on this so far, until
It forg'd him some design, which, being believed,
It was much like to do. He answer'd '*Tush!*
It can do me no damage;' adding further,
That had the king in his last sickness fail'd,
The cardinal's and Sir Thomas Lovell's heads
Should have gone off."

Henry, startled and enraged, exclaims:

"Ha! what, so rank? Ah ha!
There's mischief in this man. Canst thou say further?"

and the witness, evidently trying to remember all he can proceeds:

"Being at Greenwich,
After your highness had reproved the duke
About Sir William Blomer,—"

The king interrupts:

"I remember
Of such a time: being my sworn servant,
The duke retain'd him his. But on; what hence?"

The witness continues, quoting from a very retentive memory the unfortunate Buckingham's words:

"'*If*,' quoth he, '*I for this had been committed,*
As, to the Tower, I thought, I would have play'd
The part my father meant to act upon
The usurper Richard, who, being at Salisbury,
Made suit to come in's presence; which if granted,
As he made semblance of his duty, would
Have put his knife into him.'"

Henry, now thoroughly convinced of Buckingham's guilt, exclaims, as if astounded:

"A giant traitor!"

and Wolsey seizes this moment to calmly ask the queen in words of respectful warning or remonstrance:

"Now, madam, may his highness live in freedom,
And this man out of prison?"

Katharine, still believing in Buckingham's innocence of any criminal intent, but unable to deny his words, can only exclaim in distressed perplexity:

"God mend all!"

The king evidently observing closely the surveyor's look or manner, asks:

"There's something more would out of thee; what sayest?"

and the man concludes his dangerous recollections, word by word:

"After '*the duke his father*,' with '*the knife*,'
He stretch'd him, and, with one hand on his dagger
Another spread on 's breast, mounting his eyes,
He did discharge a horrible oath; whose tenour
Was, were he evil used, he would outgo
His father by as much as a performance
Does an irresolute purpose."

These recorded words seal Buckingham's fate, and Henry, in roused, implacable wrath, for which there certainly seemed some reason, exclaims:

> "There's his period;
> To sheathe his knife in us. He is attach'd;
> Call him to present trial: if he may
> Find mercy in the law, 'tis his; if none
> Let him not seek 't of us; by day and night!
> He's traitor to the height."

In this remarkable scene, partly founded on history, Henry and Katharine are each rendered pleasing and magnanimous, while the surveyor would seem a crafty, if not malicious witness against his former employer and Wolsey, an ambitious intriguer, taking advantage of Buckingham's dangerous words to cause his ruin by them. The historic facts represent Buckingham as a most imprudent man, yet hardly capable of contemplating the king's assassination; although his impetuous temper and vague threats would certainly justify both king and cardinal in suspecting him of dangerous treason. The queen, though sincerely believing in Buckingham's innocence, cannot disprove his dangerous language, so carefully brought against him by the united care or craft of Wolsey and the surveyor. She can only appeal to the justice of Heaven and says no more for him, while the unfortunate duke is taken a prisoner to the Tower.

The next scene is in the palace, lively, gay, and glittering. The Lord Chamberlain and Lord Sands are together partly diverted, partly offended at the Frenchified manner and talk of some young courtiers, their friends and relatives lately returned from the splendid meeting called the Field of the Cloth of Gold in France. Some of the English gentry appear prejudiced, old-fashioned, and exclusively national in their ideas, resenting imitation or even much approval of the French as the ancestral foes of England for many centuries. The Lord Chamberlain in pettish anger observes:

> "As far as I can see, all the good our English
> Have got by the late voyage is but merely
> A fit or two o' the face."

Lord Sands, who evidently knows and cares more about horses than foreign fashions, exclaims, alluding to the affected looks and gestures of some young courtiers imitating the French:

> "They have all new legs, and lame ones: one would take it,
> That never saw 'em pace before, the spavin
> Or springhalt reign'd among 'em,"

and the Chamberlain agreeing, rejoins:

> "Their clothes are after such a pagan cut too,
> That, sure, they've worn out Christendom."

Another courtier, Sir Thomas Lovell, enters, mentioning the new proclamation.

> "That's clapp'd upon the court-gate,"

for:

> "The reformation of our travell'd gallants,
> That fill the court with quarrels, talk, and tailors,"

and the Chamberlain, who has probably never been in France, rejoins:

> "I'm glad 'tis there; now I would pray our monsieurs
> To think an English courtier may be wise,
> And never see the Louvre."

From these words he had probably heard great praises of that noble picture-gallery which at this period was comparatively little known to Englishmen. Lovell continues, ridiculing the Frenchified courtiers:

> "They must either,
> (For so run the conditions,) leave those remnants
> Of fool and feather that they got in France,
> With all their honourable points of ignorance
> Pertaining thereunto, as fights and fireworks;
> Abusing better men than they can be,
> Out of a foreign wisdom: . . .
> . . . . . .
> Or pack to their old playfellows."

Chamberlain:

> "What a loss our ladies
> Will have of these trim vanities!"

Lovell:

> "Ay, marry,
> There will be woe indeed, lords:
> A French song and a fiddle has no fellow."

Lord Sands, evidently a rustic gentleman, exclaims:

"The devil fiddle 'em! I am glad they're going,
For, sure, there's no converting of 'em: now
An honest country lord, as I am, beaten
A long time out of play, may bring his plain song
And have an hour of hearing."

Amid this light talk which rather enlivens the play, the mysterious intrigues of this eventful time pursue their dangerous course. The assembled courtiers are now about to attend a splendid reception, held by Cardinal Wolsey. The nobles cannot help admiring his genius and dreading his power while they try to conceal their growing jealousy or distrust of him. The Chamberlain, asking Lovell if he is going to the cardinal's entertainment, and hearing that he is, says he is also going, and anticipating its attractions, says:

"This night he makes a supper, and a great one,
To many lords and ladies; there will be
The beauty of this kingdom, I'll assure you."

Lovell, like the rest, seems to admire yet fear the cardinal, but evidently wishes to be on the best possible terms with him, and therefore exclaims:

"That churchman bears a bounteous mind indeed,
A hand as fruitful as the land that feeds us;
His dews fall everywhere."

The Lord Chamberlain replies:

"No doubt he's noble;
He had a black mouth that said other of him."

They depart for the cardinal's abode at York Place, where many guests, including the lady Anne Boleyn, enter and are welcomed by Sir Henry Guildford assisting the cardinal in the duties of reception. He addresses the guests of both sexes in Wolsey's absence in courteous and most pleasing words:

"Ladies, a general welcome from his grace
Salutes ye all; this night he dedicates
To fair content and you. None here, he hopes,
In all this noble bevy, has brought with her
One care abroad; he would have all as merry
As, first, good company, good wine, good welcome
Can make good people."

This beautiful address is followed by the entrance of the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Sands, and Sir Thomas Lovell, to the first of whom Guildford says:

> "O, my lord! you're tardy:
> The very thought of this fair company
> Clapp'd wings to me."

and the Chamberlain, apparently older, regretfully replies:

> "You are young, Sir Harry Guildford,"

and then, becoming as lively as the other, addresses the guests:

> "Sweet ladies, will it please you sit? Sir Harry,
> Place you that side, I'll take the charge of this;
> His grace is entering. Nay, you must not freeze;
> Two women placed together makes cold weather:
> My Lord Sands, you are one will keep 'em waking;
> Pray, sit between these ladies."

Lord Sands then sits down beside Anne Boleyn, saying to her in joking pleasantry:

> "If I had chance to talk a little wild, forgive me;
> I had it from my father,"

when she sarcastically asks:

> "Was he mad, sir?"

to which he replies:

> "O! very mad, exceeding mad; in love too:
> But he would bite none; just as I do now,
> He would kiss you twenty with a breath,"

and he kisses her, as the Chamberlain exclaims:

> "Well said, my lord.
> So now you're fairly seated. Gentlemen,
> The penance lies on you if these fair ladies
> Pass away frowning,"

and Sands merrily says:

> "For my little cure,
> Let me alone."

The cardinal now enters, welcoming all his guests and exclaiming:

> "You're welcome, my fair guests; that noble lady,
> Or gentleman, that is not freely merry,
> Is not my friend: this is to confirm my welcome;
> And to you all, good health." [*Drinks.*

After some gay talk a servant announces:

"A noble troop of strangers—
And hither make as great ambassadors from foreign princes,"

when Wolsey, guessing or probably knowing who they are, asks the Chamberlain to introduce them, adding:

"You can speak the French tongue:
And, pray, receive 'em nobly, and conduct 'em
Into our presence, where this heaven of beauty
Shall shine at full upon them."

The Chamberlain goes to meet the new-comers, and Wolsey then addresses his guests:

"You have now a broken banquet; but we'll mend it.
A good digestion to you all; and once more
I shower a welcome on ye—welcome all."

Then enters the king, with attendants, all disguised as shepherds, and pretending to speak no English. The Chamberlain keeping up this mystery, says of the new guests:

"That, having heard by fame
Of this so noble and so fair assembly
This night to meet here, they could do no less,
Out of the great respect they bear to beauty,
But leave their flocks; and under your fair conduct,
Crave leave to view the ladies, and entreat
An hour of revels with 'em."

Wolsey, with courteous hospitality, replies:

"Say, lord chamberlain,
They have done my poor house grace; for which I pay 'em
A thousand thanks, and pray 'em take their pleasures."

A dance now begins, and the disguised king, selecting Anne Boleyn for his partner, exclaims in ill-omened admiration:

"The fairest hand I ever touch'd! O beauty!
Till now I never knew thee."

Then ensue music and dancing, when Wolsey, thinking it time to recognise the king, sends word through the Chamberlain to the masquers that there is one amongst them more worthy of the highest place than himself.

The new guests own there is, and Wolsey, probably soon recognising the king's stately form, addresses him, saying:

> "By all your good leaves, gentlemen, here I'll make
> My royal choice."

Henry, in high good humour and evidently pleased with all around him, exclaims while unmasking:

> "Ye have found him, cardinal.
> You hold a fair assembly; you do well, lord:
> You are a churchman, or, I'll tell you, cardinal,
> I should judge now unhappily."

Wolsey gratified, yet perhaps rather uneasy, replies:

> "I am glad
> Your grace is grown so pleasant."

and then Henry asks the Chamberlain who his partner is, and hearing her name, exclaims in his usual hearty way, partly revealing his feelings, yet watchful all the time:

> "By heaven, she is a dainty one,"

then addressing her:

> "Sweetheart,
> I were unmannerly to take you out,
> And not to kiss you. A health, gentlemen,
> Let it go round."

Wolsey quietly observes:

> "Your grace,
> I fear, with dancing is a little heated."

Henry merrily rejoins:

> "I fear, too much,"

and Wolsey, who watches the king all the time, says:

> "There's fresher air, my lord,
> In the next chamber."

Henry, thoroughly master of the joyous situation, feared or respected by all present, exclaims as if really giving orders:

> "Lead in your ladies, every one. Sweet partner,
> I must not yet forsake you. Let's be merry:
> Good my lord cardinal, I have half-a-dozen healths
> To drink to these fair ladies, and a measure
> To lead 'em once again; and then let's dream
> Who's best in favour. Let the music knock it."

This last command was doubtless promptly obeyed, and amidst the crash of musical instruments, the charm of splendid dresses and rich jewellery adorning the beautiful assemblage, the lovely scene closes, fraught indeed with future danger which probably none anticipated during that brief reign of delight and enchantment.

The first scene of the next act, full of tragic solemnity, is a grand and warning contrast to the brilliant pleasures of its predecessor. This play is indeed composed of striking contrasts, brilliant festivities, merriment, and stately pleasures being remarkably mingled with the fatal intrigues of a dangerous Court, political enmities, and implacable hatreds. In these contrasts it may somewhat recall Scott's historical novel of "Kenilworth," where amid gorgeous entertainment and gay festivities, the tragic tale of the unfortunate heroine renders the novel one of the most pathetic of its great author's works. This play is both brightened and saddened in rather a similar manner. In it, despite state executions, the grief of a deserted queen, and the ruin of a broken-hearted favourite, the gay splendour of the English Court, and the many rejoicings in London during popular festivities, make this extraordinary play gay and melancholy in alternate representations. Thus, soon after the brilliant reception at Cardinal Wolsey's and the first happy meeting of Henry and Anne Boleyn, there follows the sad execution of the unfortunate Buckingham. This nobleman seems condemned chiefly for his imprudent words, as no real proof of treason was ever established against him.

His language, however, uttered in moments of excitement, was certainly dangerous, if not menacing, and there is little doubt that Henry, the cardinal, and some others, believed he may have meant all he said. Yet his execution was generally regretted, especially by the London people, with whom he was always a favourite.

This first scene of the second act is in a London street, where some citizens meet the day of Buckingham's execution, deploring the terrible event they have assembled to witness in public. In the opinion of many, if not most, of

these Londoners, the duke's trial had been unfairly carried on, and unjust advantage taken of him by his foes in high places. It is evident not only that popular opinion was in his favour, but that Shakespeare, despite his respect for the king, inclines to make his readers consider Buckingham a victim unjustly executed.

The first citizen, describing the odious trial he had just witnessed, says to the other:

> "The great duke
> Came to the bar; where to his accusations
> He pleaded still not guilty, and alleged
> Many sharp reasons to defeat the law.
> The king's attorney on the contrary
> Urged on the examinations, proofs, confessions
> Of divers witnesses; which the duke desired
> To have brought, *viva voce*, to his face:
> At which appear'd against him his surveyor;
> Sir Gilbert Peck his chancellor; and John Car,
> Confessor to him; with that devil-monk,
> Hopkins, that made this mischief. . . .
> . . . . . .
> All these accus'd him strongly; which he fain
> Would have flung from him, but, indeed, he could not
> And so his peers, upon this evidence,
> Have found him guilty of high treason."

It is evident these citizens, though loyal to the king, yet believe in Buckingham's innocence, and the citizen concludes:

> "Much
> He spoke, and learnedly, for life; but all
> Was either pitied in him or forgotten."

This same speaker, apparently an intelligent Londoner, proceeds to blame Wolsey, who perhaps was censured for many things about which the popular king was equally responsible, had the truth been fully known:

> "Whoever the king favours,
> The cardinal instantly will find employment
> And far enough from court too."

The second citizen rejoins, confirming the general dislike to Wolsey:

> "All the commons
> Hate him perniciously, and o' my conscienee,
> Wish him ten fathoms deep: this duke as much
> They love and dote on; call him bounteous Buckingham,
> The mirror of all courtesy;—"

The luckless duke approaches, guarded on his way to execution, and the first citizen exclaims at this sight:

> "Stay there, sir,
> And see the noble ruin'd man you speak of."

The other replies:

> "Let's stand close, and behold him."

The fatal procession appears, the victim largely attended by friends and sympathisers. They pause, and Buckingham calmly addresses the crowd around him. At this moment he evidently recalls his own imprudent words, shows no consciousness of guilt, but attributes his death to the persecuting malice of his many foes:

> "All good people,
> You that thus far have come to pity me,
> Hear what I say, and then go home and lose me.
> I have this day received a traitor's judgment,
> And by that name must die: yet, heaven bear witness,
> And if I have a conscience, let it sink me.
> Even as the axe falls, if I be not faithful!"

In these noble words consciousness of no evil plot or design is evident, but in the following admission, the dangerous violence of his former language, enough to mislead either friends or foes, is freely confessed.

> "The law I bear no malice for my death,
> It has done upon the premises but justice;
> But those that sought it I could wish more Christians
> Be what they will, I heartily forgive 'em."

Then with that extraordinary devotion to the king usually shown by his victims of both sexes, old and young, he proceeds, asking all persons to accompany him to the scaffold:

> "Go with me, like good angels, to my end;
> And as the long divorce of steel falls on me,
> Make of your prayers one secret sacrifice,
> And lift my soul to heaven.
> . . . . . .
> Commend me to his grace;
> And, if he speak of Buckingham, pray, tell him
> You met him half in heaven. My vows and prayers
> Yet are the king's; and, till my soul forsake,

> Shall cry for blessings on him: may he live
> Longer than I have time to tell his years!
> Ever beloved and loving may his rule be!
> And when old time shall lead him to his end,
> Goodness and he fill up one monument!"

Buckingham never mentions his chief friend, or chief foe, Queen Katharine or Wolsey, but reverts to his father's fate in Richard III.'s time, when he was betrayed by his servant, like himself now sworn against by his surveyor. His last words are certainly like those of an innocent man and deeply affect his pitying hearers, who now discuss the rumour of a coming separation between the king and Katharine, yet none expresses a word of anger against Henry for Buckingham's execution, the blame of which was apparently for some time at least laid almost entirely to the charge of Wolsey. In fact this popular king's occasional kind acts or gracious words procured for him general affection and loyalty, while all his cruelties and even attempted illegalities were laid to the charge of his ministers. Henry, certainly an astute politician, while fiercely tyrannising over the English nobility, cautiously conciliated and gratified the lower classes of his subjects, as has been ably observed by recent historians.[1]

The next scene introduces the Lord Chamberlain, vexed, frightened and helpless, hearing that his fine pair of horses have been appropriated by the all-powerful Wolsey for his own service. He reads a letter, probably from his land steward, or master of the horse, curtly describing this high-handed proceeding:

> "They were young and handsome, and of the best breed in the north. When they were ready to set out for London, a man of my lord cardinal's, by commission and main power, took 'em from me; with this reason; his master would be served before a subject, if not before the king; which stopped our mouths, sir."

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[1] "Henry VIII. encountered no opposition when he wished to send Buckingham and Surrey, Anne Boleyn and Lady Salisbury, to the scaffold. But when without the consent of Parliament he demanded of his subjects a contribution amounting to one-sixth of their goods, he soon found it necessary to retract."—Macaulay's "History of England," chap. i.

At this news the Chamberlain exclaims in apprehensive fear, shared at this time by many of the English gentry:

> "I fear he will indeed. Well, let him have them:
> He will have all, I think."

Wolsey's influence was now so great that all classes, and more especially the nobility, his chief rivals, were afraid of him. His rare talents and many noble qualities were naturally not much appreciated, or perhaps understood, by courtiers and statesmen, always dreading his ambition and influence over the king.

The Duke of Norfolk and Lord Suffolk join the Chamberlain and discuss the coming separation of the king and queen, for which also Wolsey is generally blamed, probably more than he deserved, considering the imperious and selfish nature of his almost despotic master. Norfolk deplores the approaching royal divorce in rather pathetic words, likely expressing the feelings of many Englishmen at this time, while Suffolk ventures to make a sarcastic reply to the Chamberlain's idea of what causes the king's sadness this day: The Chamberlain says:

> "It seems the marriage with his brother's wife
> Has crept too near his conscience."

and Suffolk, perhaps in a whisper, replies:

> "No; his conscience
> Has crept too near another lady."

and Norfolk proceeds:

> "'Tis so;
> This is the cardinal's doing, the king-cardinal:
> . . . . . .
> He dives into the king's soul, and there scatters
> Dangers, doubts, wringing of the conscience,
> Fears, and despairs; and all these for his marriage:
> And out of all these to restore the king,
> He counsels a divorce; a loss of her,
> That like a jewel has hung twenty years
> About his neck, yet never lost her lustre;
> Of her, that loves him with that excellence
> That angels love good men with; even of her,
> That, when the greatest stroke of fortune falls,
> Will bless the king:"

The Chamberlain, angry with Wolsey, and loving or fearing the king, exclaims, perhaps rather unfairly:

> "Heaven will one day open
> The king's eyes, that so long have slept upon
> This bold bad man."

and Suffolk adds:

> "And free us from his slavery."

Norfolk continues, quite agreeing with the others in their opinion of king and cardinal:

> "We had need pray,
> And heartily, for our deliverance,
> Or this imperious man will work us all
> From princes into pages."

Wolsey seems to have no friend now among the English nobility. He has incurred the dislike of Queen Katharine and her friends, by assisting Henry to obtain a divorce, while Anne Boleyn, the queen's young Protestant rival, though her maid of honour, is also opposed to Wolsey, and anxious to further the Protestant party in England. During these public and private intrigues, troubles and dangers, all, however, within the kingdom of England itself, Henry preserved his sole authority among the people generally, while obeyed though dreaded by the nobility over whom he reigned with almost the despotism of a Turkish Sultan in former times.

Cardinals Wolsey and Campeius, the latter sent from Rome, are at this time discussing with Henry the coming divorce from Katharine. This design Wolsey was said to have aided and approved of, but he is completely disappointed at perceiving the king's rather sudden passion for Anne Boleyn. The king at this time Shakespeare represents as moody, sad, anxious, and when Norfolk ventures to approach the room where he is, and sees Henry looking gloomy, he says, probably to Suffolk or to himself:

> "Pray God, he be not angry."

Henry, thinking himself intruded upon, asks irritably:

> "Who's there, I say? How dare you thrust yourselves
> Into my private meditations!
> Who am I? ha?"

Norfolk, evidently frightened like all the other courtiers, humbly answers this angry question with the meekness of a timid slave:

> "A gracious king that pardons all offences
> Malice ne'er meant: our breach of duty this way
> Is business of estate; in which we come
> To know your royal pleasure."

The imperious sovereign partly appeased, yet determined to keep all the nobles in fear of him, sternly replies:

> "Ye are too bold.
> Go to; I'll make ye know your times of business:
> Is this an hour for temporal affairs, ha?"

The nobles literally cower before him, while, when addressing the lower classes or their representatives, Henry could seem graciousness itself, but the nobility knew they were almost completely in his power, a fact of which the king was equally aware.

Wolsey and the Italian cardinal, Campeius or Campeggio, now enter, and Henry courteously addresses them, as he wishes to obtain their joint aid in the coming divorce case, while Norfolk and Suffolk in this scene, probably representing the English nobility, observe with apprehension the singular intrigues now proceeding between their king and these two Churchmen. Henry exclaims in welcome words:

> "O! my Wolsey,
> The quiet of my wounded conscience;
> Thou art a cure fit for a king,"

then addressing the foreigner, Campeius, Henry says:

> "You're welcome,
> Most learned, reverend sir, into our kingdom:
> Use us, and it."

Then to Wolsey:

> "My good lord, have great care
> I be not found a talker."

Henry either is, or pretends to be, in low spirits at present while contemplating the divorce, and Wolsey, now more in his confidence than any one, then hints his wish

for the two nobles to retire, and leave the king with him and Cardinal Campeius:

> "I would your grace would give us but an hour
> Of private conference."

Henry addresses Norfolk and Suffolk with stern brevity:

> "We are busy; go."

They at once retire, murmuring to each other complaints and sarcasms which they dare not utter aloud:

Norfolk:

> "This priest has no pride in him!"

Suffolk:

> "Not to speak of:
> I would not be so sick though for his place;
> But this cannot continue."

Norfolk:

> "If it do,
> I'll venture one have-at-him."

They sullenly depart, and Wolsey addresses Henry, quietly encouraging him in his designs with that eloquent, pleasing style of which he was a master, and which was, indeed, a delightful contrast to the homely, sometimes coarse and rough language prevalent even among the higher classes at this time:

> "Your grace has given a precedent of wisdom
> Above all princes, in committing freely
> Your scruple to the voice of Christendom.
> Who can be angry now? what envy reach you?"

then alluding to Spanish sympathy for Katharine of Aragon:

> "The Spaniard, tied by blood and favour to her,
> Must now confess, if they have any goodness,
> The trial just and noble. All the clerks,
> I mean the learned ones, in Christian kingdoms
> Have their free voices: Rome, the nurse of judgment,
> Invited by your noble self, hath sent
> One general tongue unto us, this good man,
> This just and learned priest, Cardinal Campeius,
> Whom once more I present unto your highness."

Henry, whose object it is to have both cardinals in his favour, courteously rejoins:

"And once more in mine arms I bid him welcome,
And thank the holy conclave for their loves;
They have sent me such a man I would have wish'd for."

Campeius replies:

"To your highness' hand
I tender my commission; by whose virtue,
The court of Rome commanding, you, my lord
Cardinal of York, are join'd with me, their servant,
In the unpartial judging of this business."

Henry, answering courteously, sends for and praises his new secretary, Bishop Gardiner, recommended him by Wolsey, and who is quite in the cardinal's interests.

While Henry is now conversing apart with Gardiner, Campeius, knowing Wolsey has many enemies, tells him about a Doctor Pace, whose situation Gardiner now fills, and who died of grief at losing it, adding it was said that Wolsey was jealous of him. It seems surprising that this Italian prelate should know so much about English feelings and politics, but Wolsey haughtily replies, praising Gardiner:

"That good fellow,
If I command him, follows my appointment:
I will have none so near else. Learn this, brother,
We live not to be grip'd by meaner persons."

Wolsey is now full of ambitious projects; he was, in every sense a warm friend and a bitter enemy, and his extraordinary character has been accordingly represented in very different lights. Henry, who has been composing, or dictating, a letter to the hapless queen, despatches Gardiner with it to her, and then addresses the two cardinals in studied words, certainly of Shakespeare's composing, and which seem a strange mixture of determination and real or pretended regret about abandoning the queen. He thus fixes the place for the extraordinary trial:

"The most convenient place that I can think of
For such receipt of learning is Black-Friars;
There ye shall meet about this weighty business.
My Wolsey, see it furnished."

After these practical directions for accomplishing his purpose Henry alludes to his moral scruples with apparent sincerity:

> "O my lord!
> Would it not grieve an able man to leave
> So sweet a bedfellow? But conscience, conscience!
> O! 'tis a tender place, and I must leave her."

In the next scene Shakespeare introduces Anne Boleyn, talking to a shrewd old court lady, in an antechamber of the queen's apartments. Anne in this conversation pretends to dread the chance of her becoming queen, and yet to secretly desire that distinction. Her feelings are curiously revealed in this talk with her worldly old companion, who playfully rallies her on her probable change of fortune. Anne, after pitying, or pretending to pity, the poor queen, exclaims with doubtful truth:

> "By my troth and maidenhead,
> I would not be a queen."

Her old companion quickly retorts, as if she knew her well:

> "Beshrew me, I would. . . .
> And so would you,
> For all this spice of your hypocrisy.
> You, that have so fair parts of woman on you,
> Have too a woman's heart; which ever yet
> Affected eminence, wealth, sovereignty: . . .
> . . . . . .
> You would not be a queen?"

Anne protests:

> "No, not for all the riches under heaven."

The old lady wittily retorts:

> "'Tis strange: a three-pence bow'd would hire me,
> Old as I am, to queen it. . . .
> . . . . . .
> I would not be a young count in your way.
> For more than blushing comes to:"

Anne replies, as if overcome by her incredulity:

> "How you do talk!
> I swear again, I would not be a queen
> For all the world."

The old lady knows better, and merrily contradicts her:

> "In faith for little England
> You'd venture an emballing: I myself
> Would for Carnarvonshire, although there 'long'd
> No more to the crown but that."

At this moment the Lord Chamberlain enters, coming from the king, and politely asks what they are talking of, when Anne readily replies that they were pitying the poor queen in her coming troubles. The Chamberlain rejoins with the king's compliments to Anne, saying:

> "The King's majesty
> Commends his good opinion of you to you, and
> Does purpose honour to you no less flowing
> Than Marchioness of Pembroke; to which title
> A thousand pounds a year, annual support,
> Out of his grace he adds."

Anne answers in humble gratitude:

> "Beseech your lordship
> Vouchsafe to speak my thanks and my obedience
> As from a blushing handmaid, to his highness,
> Whose health and royalty I pray for."

The Chamberlain then retires praising Anne to himself with an implied compliment to Queen Elizabeth:

> "Beauty and honour in her are so mingled
> That they have caught the king: and who knows yet
> But from this lady may proceed a gem
> To lighten all this isle?"

When he is gone the old lady, while congratulating Anne, half comically deplores her own fortunes at the court, exclaiming:

> "I have been begging sixteen years in court,
> Am yet a courtier beggarly,
> . . . . . .
> And you, O fate!
> A very fresh-fish here, fie, fie, fie upon
> This compell'd fortune! have your mouth fill'd up
> Before you open it."

Anne is, or pretends to be, astonished at her new favour, and exclaims:

"This is strange to me,"

and her wily old companion jokingly asks:

"How tastes it? is it bitter?"

then reminding Anne of her words before the Chamberlain's visit, exclaims:

"There was a lady once, ('tis an old story,)
That would not be a queen, that would she not,
For all the mud in Egypt: have you heard it?"

Anne, unable to deny her words, amused, yet uneasy, replies:

"Come, you are pleasant,"

and the old courtier eagerly rejoins:

"With your theme I could
O'ermount the lark."

and reminds Anne of her good fortune.

"The Marchioness of Pembroke!
A thousand pounds a year for pure respect!
No other obligation! By my life
That promises more thousands: honour's train
Is longer than his foreskirt,
. . . . . .
Say,
Are you not stronger than you were?"

Anne, really impressed at what has happened, though likely pretending more regret than she feels, replies gravely, if not sadly:

"Good lady,
Make yourself mirth with your particular fancy,
And leave me out on 't. Would I had no being,
If this salute my blood a jot: it faints me
To think what follows."

It is hard to say whether Shakespeare means that Anne is only pretending fear, or is really overcome, by her tempting, yet dangerous position at this time. Yet her concluding words reveal some artifice, perhaps excusable enough in her extraordinary circumstances, being at once a maid of honour and also the rival of her royal

mistress. She exclaims, as if a sudden recollection flashed upon her ambitious or excited mind:

> "The queen is comfortless, and we forgetful
> In our long absence. Pray, do not deliver
> What here you have heard to her."

This idea being almost an insult to the old court lady's common-sense, she answers it in a question of five monosyllables, yet sufficiently expressive, which ends this scene:

> "What do you think me?"

There is really more important meaning in this little scene than may appear at first sight. It shows the undercurrent of secret intrigues in the palace during this eventful time, when the attempt to divorce Queen Katharine was foiled by the Papacy. Yet the Pope's refusal to sanction the royal divorce seems at first to have been uncertain or hesitating, until the increase of Protestantism in England gave the more influence to Anne Boleyn and her friends, which was dreaded by the Roman Court. Her willingness to become queen is in reality evident, though partly denied in this scene, which is followed by the grand assembly in the hall in Black-Friars, where the king, queen, Wolsey, and Campeius, with some of the chief prelates and nobles in England, are met together.

Katharine at first appeals with her usual dignity, though soon with roused indignation, to Henry, alleging that their marriage was lawful, and entreating delay in the law proceedings till she is further advised by her friends in Spain. Wolsey, anxious to please the king, wishes the trial at once proceeded with, when Katharine turns on him indignantly, exclaiming:

> "I do believe,
> Induced by potent circumstances, that
> You are mine enemy: and make my challenge
> You shall not be my judge; for it is you
> Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me,
> Which God's dew quench! therefore I say again,
> I utterly abhor, yea, from my soul
> Refuse you for my judge; whom yet once more
> I hold my most malicious foe, and think not
> At all a friend to truth."

Wolsey, in calm and eloquent words, endeavours to refute this charge of the indignant queen, appealing to the king to deny it:

"I do profess
You speak, not like yourself; who ever yet
Have stood to charity, and displayed the effects
Of disposition gentle, and of wisdom
O'ertopping woman's power. Madam, you do me wrong:
. . . . . .
You charge me
That I have blown this coal: I do deny it.
The king is present: if it be known to him
That I gainsay my deed, how may he wound,
And worthily, my falsehood; yea, as much
As you have done my truth.
. . . . . .
Therefore in him
It lies to cure me; and the cure is, to
Remove these thoughts from you: the which before
His highness shall speak in, I do beseech
You, gracious madam, to unthink your speaking
And to say so no more."

Henry remains silent, though hearing them both and well knowing the truth of the case. But Katharine, fearing the king and the cardinal are united, and that English legislation through their influence will surely be against her, resolves to lay her case before that tribunal, to which, hitherto, England and most other Christian countries finally appealed, as if to a power between heaven and earth. She exclaims, while reproaching Wolsey, probably more than he deserved, as if wishing to ignore Henry's feelings against her:

"My lord, my lord,
I am a simple woman, much too weak
To oppose your cunning . . .
You have by fortune and his highness' favours.
Gone slightly o'er low steps, and now are mounted
Where powers are your retainers, and your words
Domestics to you, serve your will as 't please
Yourself pronounce their office. I must tell you,
You tender more your person's honour than
Your high profession spiritual; that again
I do refuse you for my judge; and here
Before you all, appeal unto the pope,
To bring my whole cause 'fore his holiness,
And to be judged by him."

This bold declaration delivered at such a moment, and in such a presence, is received in silence, and Katharine curtseying to the king is about to retire, when Cardinal Campeius, evidently allied with Wolsey, exclaims:

> "The queen is obstinate,
> Stubborn to justice, apt to accuse it, and
> Disdainful to be tried by 't: 'tis not well,
> She's going away."

Then Henry, breaking silence for the first time, imperiously exclaims:

> "Call her again."

The crier, as in duty bound, then formally says:

> "Katharine Queen of England, come into the court,"

and her gentleman usher, Griffith, says to her:

> "Madam, you are call'd back."

when she, with proud fearlessness replies:

> "What need you note it? pray you, keep your way;
> When you are call'd return. Now the Lord help!
> They vex me past my patience. Pray you, pass on:
> I will not tarry; no, nor ever more
> Upon this business my appearance make
> In any of their courts."

The Queen is likely emboldened at this trying crisis in her life, by the general surprise, if not alarm, aroused among all present by her spirited appeal to the Pope, whose authority up to this time is acknowledged, at least outwardly, by the king and court. She departs, and Henry then makes a short speech in her praise, attributing many virtues to her, while steadily concealing his determination to separate legally or otherwise from her, and to marry Anne Boleyn. Wolsey now thinks it time when Katharine is gone to obtain from the king a complete vindication from her charge of his having "blown this coal" between the royal pair. This vindication the cardinal wishes publicly declared by Henry before all the assembled prelates, courtiers, and statesmen. The words attributed to these able men in this scene well indicate their differing characters. Despite many great and, certainly in the cardinal, noble qualities, they are both crafty to a great degree, each able to conceal his design and to impress the

people with very different ideas of his real feelings from what they really are. An important distinction between them is, that while Wolsey is polished, persuasive, and plausible, Henry usually assumes an appearance of frank cordiality and plain if not blunt sincerity. Henry's apparent frankness and open-hearted style of speaking evidently greatly aided him in preserving not only power but popularity during his successful yet terrible reign over a Christian and civilised nation. Thus Wolsey excuses himself by asking the king in polished winning language, which may well deceive all but the poor queen herself and a few friends who are in the secret:

> "Most gracious sir,
> In humblest manner I require your highness,
> That it shall please you to declare, in hearing
> Of all these ears, for where I am robb'd and bound
> There must I be unloosed, although not there
> At once and fully satisfied, whether ever I
> Did broach this business to your highness, or
> Laid any scruple in your way, which might
> Induce you to the question on 't? or ever
> Have to you, but with thanks to God for such
> A royal lady, spake one the least word that might
> Be to the prejudice of her present state,
> Or touch of her good person?"

Then Henry, with that assumed frankness, perhaps more successful in an English king than the most refined language, replies as if caring only for the plain truth:

> "My lord cardinal,
> I do excuse you; yea, upon mine honour,
> I free you from 't. You are not to be taught
> That you have many enemies, that know not
> Why they are so, but, like to village curs,
> Bark when their fellows do: by some of these
> The queen is put in anger. You're excused:"

Then seeing Wolsey not satisfied, he adds:

> "But will you be more justified? you ever
> Have wish'd the sleeping of this business; never desired
> It to be stirr'd; but oft have hinder'd, oft,
> The passages made towards it. On my honour,
> I speak my good lord cardinal to this point.
> And thus far clear him."

While the king and Wolsey thus speak before the

assembled listening courtiers and prelates, they probably know that were Katharine present, she would either contradict or greatly disprove their statements. Their words, however, fall undisputed on the ears of their respectful, if not timid, audience, and Henry, gliding from one subject to ~~another,~~ though always with the same end in view, formally addresses all around, the prelates especially expressing doubts as to whether his marriage with his brother's widow was ever strictly valid. He now believes, or pretends ~~to believe, that it was not,~~ and that therefore, Heaven displeased, had denied his having a son and heir, and proceeds:

> "Hence I took a thought
> This was a judgement on me: that my kingdom,
> Well worthy the best heir o' the world, should not
> Be gladded in't by me. Then follows that
> I weigh'd the danger which my realms stood in
> By this my issue's fail; and that gave to me
> Many a groaning throe. Thus hulling in
> The wild sea of my conscience, I did steer
> Towards this remedy, whereupon we are
> Now present here together;"

In addition to the voice of conscience, the attractions of the young beauty, ~~Anne Boleyn~~, are now influencing Henry's mind and stirring his passions, which, though terrible indeed, when they could be indulged with safety, seemed usually, if not always, under the control of what he knew to be his real interests. He now appeals to the Bishop of Lincoln, who, like all other subjects, is more or less afraid of him, if he had not recommended this consultation, to which the bishop assents, and then Henry appeals to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who makes no reply, while Henry, praising Katharine for many virtues, practically adds:

> "Therefore, go on;
> For no dislike i' the world against the person
> Of the good queen, but the sharp thorny points
> Of my alleged reasons drive this forward.
> Prove but our marriage lawful, by my life
> And kingly dignity, we are contented
> To wear our mortal state to come with her,
> Katharine our queen, before the primest creature
> That's paragon'd o' the world."

Then the Italian cardinal, Campeius, who naturally knows and respects the Pope's power perhaps more than any one present, exclaims:

> "So please your highness,
> The queen being absent, 'tis a needful fitness
> That we adjourn this court till further day:
> Meanwhile must be an earnest motion
> Made to the queen, to call back her appeal
> She intends unto his holiness."

All now rise to depart, while Henry's long suppressed impatience finds vent in a burst of passion, partly concealed, yet likely to some extent shown by a raised voice or irritated manner. He exclaims to himself:

> "I may perceive
> These cardinals trifle with me: I abhor
> This dilatory sloth and tricks of Rome.
> My learn'd and well-belov'd servant, Cranmer,
> Prithee, return: with thy approach, I know,
> My comfort comes along."

This wilful king shows in these few words how completely he uses all those around him for his own purposes, and chiefly values them in strict proportion to their personal obedience. Then speaking aloud, he only suffers himself to exclaim in few but decisive words:

> "Break up the court:
> I say, set on."

In his defiance of papal authority, there seems no really Protestant feelings, nor indeed any religious sentiment as yet invoked. Historic facts prove that the craft or the mingled self-control and violence of Henry deceived people far more than did the intrigues of Wolsey. The Italian saying of preserving an open manner, or countenance, while keeping the heart locked, seems to have been the successful policy of Henry during his reign. The unfortunate cardinal, despite his high position, learning, industry, and munificence, seems to have been always more or less suspected of deceit, and the more polished his language, the more he was often distrusted. But Henry, "bluff King Hal," as he was often called, well knew how to please the English people, and understood them

thoroughly. In the midst of his apparent candour and openness, he accomplished his own voluptuous as well as arbitrary designs with a success which, considering the atrocity of many of his acts, would seem incredible were it not proved by historic testimony. In fact, the king inspired general confidence, and thus triumphed in every collision with his statesmen or chief advisers, when they attempted to in any way control or restrain him.

Henry's present opposition to the Papacy, rather like that of King John, arose chiefly from the Pope's refusing in each case to sanction personal inclination, likes, or dislikes. Cranmer, Henry knows, is friendly to Anne Boleyn, and as a Protestant, hostile alike to Queen Katharine and to the cardinal. At this time, while Protestantism is increasing in England, Henry seems to stand between the conflicting churches undecided, till the opposition of the Pope to his arbitrary desires tempted him to favour the Protestant party, and to have some idea of heading them.[1] The arrival of this celebrated prelate and "the comfort" the king expected with it, refer to the coming marriage of Henry to Anne Boleyn, before whose short-lived influence the power of the great Cardinal Wolsey is now tottering to its final downfall.

Act III. describes Katharine in her palace, visited by the Cardinals Wolsey and Campeius, who offer advice about her leaving her cause entirely to the king. The queen, distrusting both, at first rejects their counsel indignantly, and tells them that nearly all her friends are in Spain, her own country, and that she can count on few, if

[1] The remarkable positions of Henry and Cranmer at this time are thus described by Macaulay: "Cranmer was at once a divine and a courtier. In his character of divine he was perfectly ready to go as far in the way of change as any Swiss or Scottish reformer. He was in every way qualified to arrange the terms of coalition between the religious and the worldly enemies of popery. What Henry and his favourite counsellor meant at one time by the supremacy, was certainly nothing less than the whole power of the keys. The King was to be the Pope of his kingdom. According to this system, as expounded by Cranmer, the King was the spiritual as well as the temporal chief of the nation."—"History of England," chap. i.

any, in England. Wolsey first addresses her with compliments in Latin, which she interrupts, exclaiming:

"O! good my lord, no Latin;
. . . . . .
A strange tongue makes my cause more strange, suspicious,
Pray, speak in English."

Campeius at length says:

"Put your main cause into the king's protection;
He's loving and most gracious; 'twill be much
Both for your honour better and your cause:
For if the trial of the law o'ertake ye,
You'll part away disgrac'd.'

Wolsey, in complete agreement with Campeius, says:

"He tells you rightly,"

and she retorts now in anger:

"Ye tell me what ye wish for both; my ruin
Is this your Christian counsel? out upon ye!
Heaven is above all yet; there sits a judge
That no king can corrupt."

They vainly try to re-assure her as to their friendly motives, yet for some time she reproaches them in roused excitement:

"Woe upon ye
And all such false professors!
Would you have me,
. . . . . .
Put my sick cause into his hands that hates me?
. . . . . .
I am old, my lords,
And all the fellowship I hold now with him
Is only my obedience."

After more lamentation Wolsey calmly says:

"Madam, you wander from the good we aim at."

Katharine, still proud and distrustful, replies:

"My lord, I dare not make myself so guilty
To give up willingly that noble title
Your master wed me to: nothing but death
Shall e'er divorce my dignities."

Wolsey exclaims:

"Pray hear me,"

but the poor queen goes on lamenting:

"Would I had never trod this English earth,
Or felt the flatteries that grow upon it!"

then yielding evidently to her fears for her attendants in case of her virtual dethronement, she exclaims:

"What will become of me now, wretched lady?
. . . . . .
Alas! poor wenches, where are now your fortunes?
Shipwreck'd upon a kingdom, where no pity,
No friends, no hope, no kindred weep for me:
Almost no grave allow'd me. Like the lily,
That once was mistress of the field and flourish'd,
I'll hang my head and perish."

Then Wolsey, exerting all his rare powers of persuasion, assures the queen of his and Campeius' friendship to her. In this assurance he may to some extent be sincere, as both cardinals alike dread the idea of Anne Boleyn's marriage with the king, but are, of course, unable to oppose, or even to delay it. Wolsey therefore says in insinuating language, perhaps knowing that the king may at any moment shake off his influence, and already beginning to be uneasy about the state of public affairs:

"If your grace
Could but be brought to know our ends are honest,
You'd feel more comfort. Why should we, good lady,
Upon what cause, wrong you? alas! our places,
The way of our profession is against it:
We are to cure such sorrows, not to sow 'em.
For goodness' sake, consider what you do;
How you may hurt yourself, ay, utterly
Grow from the king's acquaintance by this carriage.
The hearts of princes kiss obedience,
So much they love it; but to stubborn spirits
They swell, and grow as terrible as storms.
I know you have a gentle, noble temper,
A soul as even as a calm: pray think us
Those we profess, peace-makers, friends, and servants."

Campeius, guided by or agreed with Wolsey, adds:

"Madam, you'll find it so
. . . . . .
The king loves you:
Beware you lose it not; for us, if you please
To trust us in your business, we are ready
To use our utmost studies in your service."

Katharine, apparently saddened and weakened by this scene, hardly knowing what to believe, or who her real friends are in England, aware also that the cardinals may be right enough in trying to restrain the imperious king, mildly replies:

> "Do what you will, my lords; and pray forgive me
> If I have used myself unmannerly.
> Pray do my service to his majesty:
> He has my heart yet: and shall have my prayers
> While I shall have my life. Come, reverend fathers,
> Bestow your counsels on me: she now begs
> That little thought, when she set footing here,
> She should have bought her dignities so dear."

This scene is almost literally taken from history,[1] and seems to show that the broken-hearted queen is failing both in health and spirits under the heavy trials of her strange position. At this time Wolsey's objects or wishes may be hard to explain. His influence with the king had hitherto been almost unbounded, his chances of becoming Pope were perhaps never so great as he thought them, yet he seemed inspired by over-weening confidence for some time. But the sudden rise of Anne Boleyn in Henry's favour completely confounds his hopes and designs. Despite the noble character of Queen Katharine and the many great qualities of Cardinal Wolsey, they were both more or less in the power of that extraordinary despot, whose skill in restraining his desires when opposed to his interests, and whose shameless indulgence of them whenever they could be indulged with safety, made him practically the most successful of all the English kings. In piety, learning, and generosity, the queen and the cardinal indeed towered high above this terrible sovereign, yet they, as well as Buckingham and many other distinguished subjects, became Henry's victims in succession, either executed, ruined, or heart-broken. Yet the king surviving them for many years, enjoyed his reign, gratifying his passions with little opposition. Unlike the sullen King John or the restless Richard III., Henry VIII. showed to

[1] See Howard Staunton's Notes.

all except his helpless victims a courtesy, frankness, and good nature which made him welcome and applauded whenever he appeared in public.

Shakespeare's sketch of this monarch, written in the reign of his daughter, Queen Elizabeth, and comprising only a short period of his rule, is, however, far more favourable than the statements of most historians. Yet the poet does impartial justice to Henry's victims, and his rare calmness of judgment makes this play perhaps the most remarkable of all the historical ones.

After Katharine agrees to consult the two cardinals, being evidently distressed and deeply dejected, the scene changes to an antechamber in the Palace, where some of the chief noblemen of the court, who all detest or dread Wolsey, are now expecting with evident joy the latter's loss of favour with the king. Norfolk, Surrey, Suffolk, and the Lord Chamberlain are agreed like one man in disliking and fearing the cardinal. This distinguished prelate turning aside from his sacred profession had certainly displayed some of the highest qualities of a statesman. None about the English court equalled him in his immense energy, ability, love of learning, and generosity to those he favoured. He was now in the position of a statesman prelate, enjoying the king's chief confidence in temporal affairs, while secretly hoping and trying to obtain the Papacy. He had no influential relatives; on the contrary, he was of humble origin, distrusted and opposed by the powerful English aristocracy, mostly united in resenting his intrusion, as they thought it, on their exclusive domain, in managing public affairs. Yet Wolsey, while enjoying Henry's favour, defied all such foes completely. The greatness of his mind, his learning, and his genius made him naturally despise and overcome many opponents who, relying chiefly on ancestral fame for preserving hereditary influence, were often utterly unlike their departed relations whose titles and fortunes they inherited. Wolsey, while Henry's chief minister, hoped to obtain the Popedom, and some thought he had a good chance of success. Had he obtained this position, it would necessarily have placed him

above the king in influence, while the latter remained in the Catholic Church. But Henry's religious belief was to all appearance very subservient to his personal inclinations. To do him justice, he was certainly at this time placed in a very difficult position, between his divided English Protestant and Catholic subjects, who were now represented in great measure by the rival prelates, Wolsey and Cranmer. The influence of Anne and her friends was in favour of Cranmer and opposed to Wolsey. It is certain, therefore, that whatever conscience or right feeling belonged to Henry, was appealed to by these able Churchmen in favour of the rival interests of their respective faiths. Thus Wolsey, though in apparent power, became more and more surrounded by spies longing for his downfall, and through their discovering private correspondence between him and friends in Rome, Wolsey's secrets became known to Henry. The nobles guessing, or knowing, this fact, now eagerly anticipate Wolsey's fall, and suspect that the king's wrath will soon be aroused against his former favourite. The Lord Chamberlain, who apparently knows less of the news, or is perhaps more timid than the others, replies to Norfolk, who with Suffolk and Surrey urge him to join in a league against the cardinal:

> "My lords, you speak your pleasures.
> What he deserves of you and me I know;
> . . . . . .
> If you cannot
> Bar his access to the king, never attempt
> Anything on him, for he hath a witchcraft
> Over the king in 's tongue."

Norfolk, who knows the latest news, rather triumphantly replies:

> "O! fear him not;
> His spell in that is out: the king hath found
> Matter against him that for ever mars
> The honey of his language."

Surrey, overjoyed like the rest at the idea of Wolsey's disgrace, exclaims with somewhat spiteful eagerness, for which he may indeed have some cause:

> "Sir,
> I should be glad to hear such news as this
> Once every hour."

Norfolk proceeds, with bitter gratification:

> "Believe it, this is true:
> In the divorce his contrary proceedings
> Are all unfolded; wherein he appears
> As I would wish mine enemy."

Lord Suffolk, who like Norfolk knows more than Surrey, continues:

> "The cardinal's letters to the pope miscarried,
> And came to the eye o' the king; wherein was read,
> How that the cardinal did entreat his holiness
> To stay the judgement o' the divorce; for if
> It did take place, 'I do,' quoth he, 'perceive
> My king is tangled in affection to
> A creature of the queen's, Lady Anne Boleyn.'"

The Lord Chamberlain now reveals more which he has hitherto apparently thought best to conceal from the other courtiers, and informs them that Henry is already married to Anne. All the nobles are pleased, and rejoice at the news. It seems strange in the case of Norfolk, being the chief Roman Catholic nobleman in England, to rejoice at this marriage. Either his gratification is attributed to him by the poet without warrant, or, if historically true, can only be explained by his dread or hatred of Wolsey at this time overcoming every other feeling. Suffolk supplies yet more news:

> "Cardinal Campeius
> Is stol'n away to Rome; hath ta'en no leave;
> Has left the cause of the king unhandled; and
> Is posted, as the agent of our cardinal,
> To second all his plot. I do assure you
> The king cried Ha! at this."

Henry's raised voice and angry looks are doubtless well known to all around him, and often the cause of real terror, but now these courtiers are delighted to think that his fierce temper is roused against their foe, and the Chamberlain replies:

> "Now, God incense him,
> And let him cry Ha! louder."

Suffolk then announces the return of Cranmer, who has apparently consulted learned foreign authorities about the

legality of the king's divorce, adding that Anne's coronation approaches, and that:

> "Katharine no more
> Shall be called queen, but princess dowager,
> And widow to Prince Arthur."

Norfolk observes:

> "This same Cranmer's
> A worthy fellow, and hath ta'en much pain
> In the king's business."

Suffolk assents, with the practical remark:

> "He has; and we shall see him
> For it an archbishop."

At this moment Wolsey enters with his faithful secretary, Thomas Cromwell. The cardinal, perplexed and alarmed, shows uneasiness despite his usual self-control; the unfriendly eyes of the courtiers examine him narrowly, while Norfolk exclaims to the others:

> "Observe, observe; he's moody."

Wolsey asks Cromwell:

> "The packet, Cromwell,
> Gave't you the king?"

Cromwell:

> "To his own hand, in's bedchamber."

Wolsey:

> "Look'd he o' the inside of the paper?"

Cromwell, accustomed, like all others probably about the court, to watch the king closely, replies:

> "Presently
> He did unseal them; and the first he view'd
> He did it with a serious mind; a heed
> Was in his countenance. You he bade
> Attend him here this morning."

Wolsey tells Cromwell to leave him for a while, and then without noticing, perhaps hardly seeing the courtiers, reveals in a remarkable soliloquy some of his hopes, fears, and plans. He still thinks he has power over the king,

and as yet does not know Anne Boleyn's present position, though he apprehends its future probability.

Wolsey, full of plans how to control or influence the king, exclaims to himself:

> "It shall be to the Duchess of Alençon,
> The French king's sister; he shall marry her.
> Anne Boleyn! No, I'll no Anne Boleyns for him;
> There's more in't than fair visage. Boleyn;
> No, we'll no Boleyns. Speedily I wish
> To hear from Rome."

Then remembering and wondering at Anne's new title, he exclaims:

> "The Marchioness of Pembroke!"

He stops, and Norfolk with the others watching the movements of his agitated countenance, make various comments:

Norfolk:

> "He's discontented."

Suffolk:

> "May be he hears the king
> Does whet his anger to him."

Surrey:

> "Sharp enough,
> Lord, for thy justice!"

Wolsey proceeds in disdainful alarm and surprised at the king's new proceedings:

> "The late queen's gentlewoman, a knight's daughter,
> To be her mistress' mistress! the queen's queen;
> This candle burns not clear: 'tis I must snuff it;
> Then out it goes. What though I know her virtuous
> And well-deserving? yet I know her for
> A spleeny Lutheran; and not wholesome to
> Our cause, that she should lie i' the bosom of
> Our hard-ruled king."

For the first time Wolsey apprehends that the religious element will now influence Henry, adding:

> "Again, there is sprung up
> An heretic, an arch one, Cranmer; one
> Hath crawled into the favour of the king,
> And is his oracle."

He pauses, and the nobles, with delight at his evident distraction of mind, observe:

Norfolk:

"He is vex'd at something."

Suffolk:

"I would 't were something that would fret the string
The master-cord on 's heart!"

The king now enters, attended by Sir Thomas Lovell, and reading some papers. He exclaims, as if much surprised, without noticing any one, and evidently referring to the papers in his hands:

"What piles of wealth hath he accumulated
To his own portion! and what expense by the hour
Seems to flow from him! How i' the name of thrift,
Does he rake this together?"

Then seeing the courtiers, he asks;

"Now, my lords,
Saw you the cardinal?"

Hitherto Henry had not perceived Wolsey, though near him, being occupied in reading the papers he has. Norfolk eagerly answers the king, describing the cardinal's apparent perplexed state of mind with a hostile exactness evidently meant to arouse still further Henry's mistrust or suspicion.

"My lord, we have
Stood here observing him; some strange commotion
Is in his brain: he bites his lip and starts;
Stops on a sudden, looks upon the ground,
Then lays his finger on his temple; straight
Springs out into fast gait; then stops again,
Strikes his breast hard; and anon he casts
His eye against the moon: in most strange postures
We have seen him set himself."

Henry listens in confirmed suspicion, and to the delight of the assembled courtiers reveals his sudden displeasure with Wolsey, attributing it to the cardinal being too rich in worldly luxuries, but in reality deeply offended at his secret intrigues with Rome and opposition to his marriage

with Anne. After hearing Norfolk's description of Wolsey's agitation, he calmly observes:

> "It may well be,
> There is a mutiny in's mind. This morning
> Papers of state he sent me to peruse,
> As I required; and wot you what I found
> There, on my conscience, put unwittingly?
> Forsooth an inventory, thus importing;
> The several parcels of his plate, his treasure,
> Rich stuffs and ornaments of household, which
> I find at such proud rate that it outspeaks
> Possession of a subject."

The courtiers are overjoyed at Henry's sudden anger with the fallen favourite, and Norfolk exclaims in delighted surprise and quite representing the others:

> "It's heaven's will;
> Some spirit put this paper in the packet
> To bless your eye withal."

Henry, now completely master of the situation, resolves to taunt or reproach Wolsey before publicly degrading him. He utters a few words intended for the courtiers alone, which they doubtless reported to their friends as proofs of Henry's right feeling and desire to keep every one in his proper place:

> "If we did think
> His contemplation were above the earth,
> And fix'd on spiritual object, he should still
> Dwell in his musings; but I am afraid
> His thinkings are below the moon, not worth
> His serious considering."

As Wolsey remains wrapped in thought, never noticing Henry, the latter whispers to his attendant, Lovell, to inform the cardinal of his presence. Wolsey, evidently startled, first exclaims:

> "Heaven forgive me!"

then addressing the king with accustomed humility:

> "Ever God bless your highness!"

In the ensuing scene the assumed calmness, yet suppressed anger of Henry, and the nervous, but polished,

even pathetic language of the cardinal, reveal their true characters in a remarkable manner. The king, with keen sarcasm, by apparent allusion to Wolsey's wealth, introduces the words "stuff" and "inventory," while watching their effect and concealing the real cause of his anger till quite the end of this extraordinary conversation. Henry at first pretends to excuse Wolsey for his unusual absence of mind:

> "Good my lord,
> You are full of heavenly stuff, and bear the inventory
> Of your best graces in your mind, the which
> You were now running o'er: you have scarce time
> To steal from spiritual leisure a brief span
> To keep your earthly audit; sure, in that
> I deem you an ill husband, and am glad
> To have you therein my companion."

These words, as intended, take Wolsey completely by surprise; he perhaps never before perceived such a power of sarcasm in the apparently open-minded, frank monarch, yet on the spur of the moment he makes a becoming, expressive reply:

> "Sir,
> For holy offices I have a time; a time
> To think upon the part of business which
> I bear i' the state; and nature does require
> Her times of preservation, which perforce
> I, her frail son, amongst my brethren mortal,
> Must give my tendance to."

Henry, still keeping the all-important papers in his hands and listening calmly to Wolsey's humble words, remarks with assumed politeness:

> "You have said well."

The cardinal, trying to regain his usual astuteness, replies:

> "And ever may your highness yoke together,
> As I will lend you cause, my doing well
> With my well saying!"

The king knows he has Wolsey in his power, though to a limited extent, as he could hardly have executed him as safely as if he had not been a Churchman. He therefore

resolves to torment him with reproaches or sarcasm, without as yet revealing the cause of his displeasure.

"'Tis well said again;
And 'tis a kind of good deed to say well:
And yet words are no deeds. My father loved you;
He said he did, and with his deed did crown
His word upon you: since I had my office
I have kept you next my heart; have not alone
Employ'd you where high profits might come home,
But pared my present havings, to bestow
My bounties upon you."

Wolsey, still not knowing that Henry has his private papers in possession, is evidently confounded at these words, and at the king's unusual calmness of manner, like a lull before the storm, and wonderingly asks himself:

"What should this mean?"

while Surrey says aside to the other courtiers a few words which doubtless represented the wish of nearly all the English nobility:

"The Lord increase this business!"

Henry proceeds in deliberate reproach, though in the guise of a practical question:

"Have I not made you
The prime man of the state? I pray you tell me
If what I now pronounce you have found true;
And if you may confess it, say withal
If you are bound to us or no. What say you?"

This direct question suddenly asked by his terrible king, evidently confuses the cardinal, who now, quite on his defence, gratefully replies:

"My sovereign, I confess your royal graces,
Shower'd on me daily, have been more than could
My studied purposes requite; which went
Beyond all man's endeavours; my endeavours
Have ever come too short of my desires,
Yet filed with my abilities. Mine own ends
Have been mine so, that evermore they pointed
To the good of your most sacred person and
The profit of the state. For your great graces
Heap'd upon me, poor undeserver, I
Can nothing render but allegiant thanks,
My prayers to heaven for you, my loyalty,
Which ever has and ever shall be growing,
Till death, that winter, kill it."

This eloquent, even pathetic, answer Henry hears with concealed contempt. He has in his hand all the time, unknown to Wolsey, the latter's secret correspondence with friends in Rome, but defers mentioning it till he has heard the cardinal plead more in justification, to which he, as if partly amusing himself, makes sarcastic replies, restraining his terrific anger with that rare power of self-control which always tempted Henry to indulge it when safe to do so, but never otherwise. He coolly answers the agitated cardinal:

> "Fairly answer'd;
> A loyal and obedient subject is
> Therein illustrated; the honour of it
> Does pay the act of it, as, i' the contrary,
> The foulness is the punishment."

Then he resumes his trying, or rather tormenting, remarks, intimating anger without expressing it:

> "I presume
> That as my hand has open'd bounty to you,
> My heart dropp'd love, my power rain'd honour more
> On you than any; so your hand and heart,
> Your brain, and every function of your power,
> Should, notwithstanding that your bond of duty,
> As 'twere in love's particular, be more
> To me, your friend, than any."

Wolsey, perceiving how enraged Henry really is, and as yet not knowing why, becomes more agitated, and eagerly protests in self-defence:

> "I do profess
> That for your highness' good I ever labour'd
> More than mine own;
> . . . . . .
> Though all the world should crack their duty to you
> And throw it from their soul; though perils did
> Abound as thick as thought could make 'em, and
> Appear in forms more horrid, yet my duty,
> As doth a rock against the chiding flood,
> Should the approach of this wild river break,
> And stand unshaken yours."

Henry sarcastically replies, appealing to the delighted courtiers, who well know how he is tormenting the unfortunate cardinal:

> "'Tis nobly spoken.
> Take notice, lords, he has a loyal breast,
> For you have seen him open't."

Then addressing Wolsey with the same assumed calmness till the last sentence, when the pent-up fire of his wrath flashes forth after handing him two papers:

> "Read o'er this;
> And after, this; and then to breakfast with
> What appetite you have."

Henry's stern, even ferocious, glance at saying these last words evidently terrifies Wolsey, who exclaims as the king departs frowning upon him, and attended by the courtiers:

> "What should this mean?
> What sudden anger 's this? how have I reap'd it?
> He parted frowning from me, as if ruin
> Leap'd from his eyes:"

then a grand, yet terrible, comparison occurs to him:

> "So looks the chafed lion
> Upon the daring huntsman that has gall'd him;
> Then makes him nothing."

The fierce look in the king's eyes naturally startles Wolsey, who has doubtless seen it before directed against other objects of his dangerous and often fatal wrath. But he soon rouses himself from fanciful thoughts, and exclaims in utter perplexity:

> "I must read this paper;
> I fear, the story of his anger.' Tis so:
> This paper has undone me! 'Tis the account
> Of all that world of wealth I have drawn together
> For mine own ends; indeed, to gain the popedom
> And fee my friends in Rome. O negligence!
> Fit for a fool to fall by: what cross devil
> Made me put this main secret in the packet
> I sent the king? Is there no way to cure this?
> . . . . . .
> I know 't will stir him strongly; yet I know
> A way, if it take right, in spite of fortune
> Will bring me off again."

He looks at the next letter, as the king had directed, without reading loud the full contents, which are never told. Shakespeare probably knew rumours about them, but

their actual purport was never published to the English nation, and Wolsey proceeds to examine the second paper:

> "What's this? '*To the Pope!*'
> The letter, as I live, with all the business
> I writ to 's holiness."

From this moment Wolsey loses all hope of regaining Henry's favour. The Papacy has hitherto been the only foreign authority which had the least control over the king and Wolsey's thoughtful mind, well knowing his king's character and present position, shrinks from the contemplation of the future, as he exclaims from his heart:

> "Nay then, farewell!
> I have touch'd the highest point of all my greatness
> And from that full meridian of my glory
> I haste now to my setting: I shall fall
> Like a bright exhalation in the evening
> And no man see me more."

The courtiers now re-enter, all delighted at Wolsey's disgrace, and in every way inclined to add insult to injury. Norfolk delivers the king's message to render up the great seal immediately to them, and to confine himself to his friend Gardiner's, the bishop of Winchester's, abode, Asher House, till he hears further.

Wolsey, trying to recover his former spirit to answer his foes, exclaims proudly:

> "Stay:
> Where's your commission, lords? words cannot carry
> Authority so weighty."

He then yielding to impotent anger reproaches them for their envy to himself, refusing to give up the great seal but to the king in person. At this bold declaration Surrey angrily exclaims:

> "Thou art a proud traitor, priest,"

when, perhaps with truth, Wolsey retorts:

> "Proud lord, thou liest:
> Within these forty hours Surrey durst better
> Have burnt that tongue than said so."

Surrey then warmly reproaches him for being the

cause of Buckingham's execution, and of other vindictive acts.

In justice to these lords who now join in reproaching Wolsey, they evidently believed that he was the real cause of Henry's cruelties. This idea was firmly fixed in the minds of most at this time, and it was not till after the cardinal had disappeared from political life that many began to suspect that Henry himself was far more tyrannical than they at first believed.

Wolsey tries at first to vindicate himself plausibly, if not truthfully, in the case of Buckingham, and replies:

> "The duke by law
> Found his deserts: how innocent I was
> From any private malice in his end
> His noble jury and foul cause can witness."

Norfolk, Surrey, and Suffolk then all three reproach the unfortunate cardinal, who, though ably defending himself, can hardly avoid showing his grief and depression, when the Lord Chamberlain in a nobler spirit remonstrates, saying:

> "Press not a falling man too far; 'tis virtue;
> His faults lie open to the laws; let them,
> Not you, correct him."

This interposition shortens the aggravating scene, and with a few more angry words they leave Wolsey, Norfolk exclaiming as a last taunt:

> "So fare you well, my little good lord cardinal."

and Wolsey, when alone, exclaims:

> "So farewell to the little good you bear me."

He then relapses into a sad soliloquy; and evidently despairing of regaining the king's favour, can only see ruin before him, and rather vaguely begins to despise those ambitious hopes and feelings which had diverted his great mind from its original religious bias or intention. As if recalling earlier days he exclaims, after bewailing his fall:

> "Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:
> I feel my heart new open'd. O! how wretched
> Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours.

> There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
> That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
> More pangs and fears than wars and women have;
> And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
> Never to hope again."

Wolsey thus recalls the king's engaging frankness and cordial manner, while contemplating the utter ruin and misery in the same tyrant's power to inflict at his capricious inclination. While thus thinking his attached secretary, Cromwell, enters, and to him Wolsey unburdens his mind freely, placing thorough confidence in him. Cromwell, utterly confounded at what he has heard of his patron's sudden disgrace, exclaims:

> "I have no power to speak, sir,"

and Wolsey replies with assumed calmness:

> "What! amazed
> At my misfortunes? can thy spirit wonder
> A great man should decline? Nay, an you weep,
> I am fall'n indeed."

The other in sympathy asks:

> "How does your grace?"

and Wolsey replies in a manner the other probably little expected, but which proved both the greatness of his mind and the peculiarity of his own personal history. He was a man whose natural inclinations had first recommended the clerical profession, but had been tempted by the deep interest and attractions of public life to become practically the chief statesman of his country; and now in sudden political disgrace, his powerful mind falls back on the consoling resources of his original calling. He therefore, without showing the least anger against vindictive, triumphant foes, calmly answers Cromwell:

> "Why, well;
> Never so truly happy, my good Cromwell.
> I know myself now; and I feel within me
> A peace above all earthly dignities,
> A still and quiet conscience."

He says much to the same effect, yet in his changing state of mind, his subsequent words occasionally reveal

a suppressed excitement, though quite free from personal animosity to any one. He hears from Cromwell that the celebrated Sir Thomas More is appointed Lord Chancellor in his place, and exclaims:

> "That's somewhat sudden;
> But he's a learned man. May he continue
> Long in his highness' favour, and do justice
> For truth's sake and his conscience; that his bones,
> When he has run his course and sleeps in blessings,
> May have a tomb of orphans' tears wept on 'em!"

This beautiful allusion to a Lord Chancellor's protecting helpless orphans is most impressive, yet whether Wolsey was capable of uttering so noble a sentiment, or whether it is alone due to Shakespeare, can hardly be known.

Cromwell, continuing his news, says that Cranmer is now Archbishop of Canterbury. Wolsey, foreseeing the encouragement this appointment must be to the Protestant party increasing in power, exclaims with deep meaning:

> "That's news indeed."

Lastly, Cromwell tells the cardinal that Anne Boleyn, being privately married to Henry, is now acknowledged queen, and her coronation is approaching. This news fairly overcomes Wolsey, as the realisation of his apprehensions. He now perceives what perhaps he had never before quite realised to himself, that her influence over Henry had in great measure, if not chiefly, caused his disgrace. He exclaims with impressive earnestness:

> "There was the weight that pulled me down. O Cromwell!
> The king has gone beyond me: all my glories
> In that one woman I have lost for ever.
> No sun shall ever usher forth mine honours,
> Or gild again the noble troops that waited
> Upon my smiles."

Wolsey now sees how completely Anne Boleyn and her friends have superseded him in the king's regard, if not confidence, and that they will now acquire the chief power in the kingdom. Wolsey's last wish, therefore, is to provide for those who were faithful to him, and he

advises Cromwell to at once leave him, as he is a poor fallen man, unworthy to be his lord and master. Wolsey, like everybody else about the English court, constantly manifests his love and respect for the king even in the midst of his disgrace and sorrow. He exclaims to Cromwell:

> "Seek the king;
> That sun, I pray, may never set! I have told him
> What and how true thou art; he will advance thee:
> . . . . . .
> (I know his noble nature) not to let
> Thy hopeful service perish too."

It is not very easy to see at this time what Henry's nobleness is, yet he seems evidently credited with that sublime quality. In matters of fact he seems a wilful, imperious, despotic king, a mixture of craft and violence, surrounded not only by obedient but admiring subjects. When they are irritated at his frequent acts of tyranny, they show discontent, but seem soon conciliated and recalled to contented loyalty by the cajoling power of their fortunate ruler, who certainly proved that he thoroughly understood and knew how to manage the English nation of his time.

Thomas Cromwell, a faithful man, while hearing the king's praise, declares that, though Henry may have his future service, his prayers will always be for Wolsey. The cardinal, generally abandoned and humbled, expecting nothing but disgrace and insult, melts at these words of attachment, and exclaims, evidently from his heart:

> "Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear
> In all my miseries; but thou hast forced me,
> Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.
> Let's dry our eyes: and thus far hear me, Cromwell;
> And, when I am forgotten, as I shall be,
> And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention
> Of me more must be heard of, say, I taught thee,
> Say, Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,
> And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,
> Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in;
> A sure and safe one, though thy master miss'd it.
> Mark but my fall, and that that ruin'd me.

Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition.
. . . . . .
Be just and fear not.
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's and truth's: then if thou fall'st, O Cromwell!
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr. Serve the king;
And——"

Here he breaks off, apparently overcome by the effects of his recent excitement, and then feebly proceeds:

"Prithee, lead me in;
There take an inventory of all I have,
To the last penny; 'tis the king's my robe
And my integrity to heaven are all
I dare now call mine own."

Then in words not of Shakespeare's composing, but which he is really said to have uttered, he appeals to Divine Justice at this moment of worldly ruin and disgrace:

"O Cromwell, Cromwell!
Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, He would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies."

This is the only time Wolsey mentions the king with any kind of resentment, or sense of injury, and indeed these words seem hardly consistent with his belief in the noble nature of his sovereign.

Shakespeare, perhaps, had no wish to invent any disloyal or disrespectful words, no matter how just, about the father of his own sovereign; and in merely recording Wolsey's well-known words, the poet could give no offence. Yet few as they are, they evidently express a far more natural feeling than words of loyal admiration coming from Wolsey at this time. In fact, Wolsey's historic words at this crisis of his blighted life, prove that he thought himself a faithful servant unjustly treated by a capricious or tyrannical sovereign.

Cromwell naturally tries to calm his sudden agitation by exclaiming:

"Good sir, have patience."

Then the cardinal, his great mind reverting to the

sacred profession, for which he was originally destined, replies with calm, even lofty resignation:

> "So I have. Farewell
> The hopes of court! my hopes in heaven do dwell."

From these devout words it might be expected that Wolsey's future life would have been devoted to religious thoughts and enterprises. But his weakened bodily health prevented anything of the sort. Unlike Ignatius Loyola, who, at first a gallant soldier, rose from a sick-bed an enthusiastic religious devotee, Wolsey's death, which soon followed his political downfall, was more like that of a broken-hearted statesman, recognising when too late that he had made an irrevocable mistake between Church and State when he had abandoned the sublime duties of the former for the dangerous attractions of the latter. His fall, after so many efforts to improve English knowledge and education, was evidently regretted by many who had formerly envied or disparaged him.[1]

He never appears in the play after this scene, though his character and conduct are again alluded to. His downfall, however, was accompanied by no apparent popular sympathy. The crafty, yet arrogant, king had indeed in astuteness, as well as in utter unscrupulousness, gone beyond him, and henceforth reposed confidence in others who were equally, if not even more, expected to aid and promote his personal caprices or inclinations.

The next act and scene describe two London gentlemen in the streets of Westminster, discussing the coronation of Anne Boleyn and the divorce desired by Henry from Queen Katharine. The first says:

> "You come to take your stand here, and behold
> The Lady Anne pass from her coronation?"

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[1] "When we consider that the subsequent part of Henry's reign was much more criminal than that which had been directed by Wolsey's counsels, we shall be inclined to suspect those historians of partiality who have endeavoured to load the memory of this minister with such violent reproaches."—"Hume's History," chap. xxx.

The second answers:

> "'Tis all my business. At our last encounter
> The Duke of Buckingham came from his trial."

First:

> "'Tis very true: but that time offered sorrow;
> This, general joy."

The second gentleman replies in words which still apply to the London people of the present time during royal celebrations:

> "The citizens,
> I am sure, have shown at full their royal minds,
> As, let 'em have their rights, they are ever forward
> In celebration of this day with shows,
> Pageants, and sights of honour.
> . . . . . .
> May I be bold to ask what that contains,
> That paper in your hand?"

the other replies:

> "Yes; 'tis the list
> Of those that claim their offices this day
> By custom of the coronation."

His companion asks about Queen Katharine's position, and the other replies:

> "That I can tell you too. The archbishop
> Of Canterbury, accompanied with other
> Learned and reverend fathers of his order,
> Held a late court at Dunstable, six miles off
> From Ampthill, where the princess lay; to which
> She was often cited by them, but appear'd not:
> And to be short, for not appearance and
> The king's late scruple, by the main assent
> Of all these learned men she was divorced,
> And the late marriage made of none effect:
> Since which she was removed to Kimbolton,
> Where she remains now sick."

His hearer, pitying the unfortunate queen, exclaims:

> "Alas! good lady,"

when at this moment the trumpets sound, and the procession gracing the new queen's coronation appears, carefully described with the precision of a gratified eye-witness. The two gentlemen show to each other the chief personages as they pass, with all the interest and

exactness of loyal subjects; and Shakespeare certainly seems in this, as in all his other plays laid in London, to admire and make the very most of everything connected with the court.

Thus, after some of the chief nobles pass, one gentleman exclaims at sight of the young queen:

"Thou hast the sweetest face I ever look'd on.
Sir, as I have a soul, she is an angel:
Our king has all the Indies in his arms";

the other observes:

"They that bear
The cloth of honour over her, are four barons
Of the Cinque-ports,"

while the other enthusiastically rejoins:

"Those men are happy; and so are all are near her,"

and one of them, full of curiosity, asks:

"Is that old noble lady, Duchess of Norfolk?"

the other says:

"It is; and all the rest are countesses,"

while his companion rejoins, with only too much truth:

"Their coronets say so. These are stars indeed;
And sometimes falling ones,"

and the other prudently replies:

"No more of that."

A third gentleman now comes from Westminster Abbey, where he has seen and now describes the coronation of the ill-fated Anne Boleyn to the other two.

There are few, if any, places in England which recall so much of its former days as this noble edifice. Historical students visiting it are at once reminded, not only of English history, but of Shakespeare's frequent mention of it. On this solemn occasion it appeared at its utmost advantage. The delighted witness thus describes:

"The rich stream
Of lords and ladies, having brought the queen
To a prepared place in the choir, fell off
A distance from her; while her grace sat down
To rest awhile, some half-an-hour or so,

In a rich chair of state, opposing freely
The beauty of her person to the people.
. . . . . .
which when the people
Had the full view of, such a noise arose
As the shrouds make at sea in a stiff tempest,
As loud, and to as many tunes; hats, cloaks,
(Doublets, I think,) flew up; and had their faces
Been loose, this day they had been lost. Such joy
I never saw before.
. . . . . .
At length her grace rose, and with modest paces
Came to the altar; where she kneel'd, and saint-like
Cast her fair eyes to heaven and pray'd devoutly.
Then rose again and bow'd her to the people:
When by the Archbishop of Canterbury
She had all the royal makings of a queen;
As holy oil, Edward Confessor's crown
. . . . . .
And all such emblems
Laid nobly on her; which perform'd, the choir,
With all the choicest music of the kingdom,
Together sung 'Te Deum.'"

These London men then mention the disputes between Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop Gardiner of Winchester, the former of whom is rising fast, they think, in popular esteem and in the king's favour. The unfortunate Wolsey, Cardinal of York, is now politically effaced, as he predicted, from men's minds, at least from any public notice.

One of these London citizens, who evidently is well informed about the political changes at this time, says to another, who named York Place:

"Sir,
You must no more call it York Place, that's past;
For since the cardinal fell, that title's lost;
'Tis now the king's and call'd Whitehall."

Wolsey is at present quite replaced in Henry's favour by Cranmer. This remarkable play, on the whole true to history, has startling changes from grave to gay in its various scenes. While Anne Boleyn and her friends are rejoicing in their short-lived favour with an almost despotic monarch, his former wife, Katharine of Aragon, is dying at Kimbolton, apparently from the effects of grief and a broken heart.

The next scene, therefore, after the magnificent rejoicings at Anne's coronation, is at Kimbolton, where the divorced queen now "sick to death," as she tells her attendant Griffith, asks:

> "Didst thou not tell me, Griffith, as thou ledd'st me,
> That the great child of honour, Cardinal Wolsey,
> Was dead?"

Griffith then relates that the unfortunate cardinal was arrested and about to be brought to trial when he suddenly fell ill, and entering the Abbey at Leicester, thus addressed the Abbot:

> "O! father abbot;
> An old man, broken with the storms of state,
> Is come to lay his weary bones among ye;
> Give him a little earth for charity,"

and soon died in that place of refuge.

His career is nobly and accurately described by Dr Johnson's lines, which thoroughly agree with Shakespeare's sketch:

> "In full-blown dignity see Wolsey stand,
> Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand,
> To him the church, the realm, their powers consign,
> Thro' him the rays of regal bounty shine,
> Turn'd by his nod the stream of honour flows,
> His smile alone security bestows.
> At length his sovereign frowns—the train of state
> Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.
> Now drops at once the pride of awful state
> The golden canopy, the glittering plate,
> The regal palace, the luxurious board,
> The liv'ried army and the menial lord.
> With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd,
> He seeks the refuge of monastic rest,
> Grief aids disease, remember'd folly stings
> And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings."
>
> —*Vanity of Human Wishes.*

Katharine, though still believing Wolsey her enemy, gently exclaims:

> "So may he rest; his faults lie gently on him!"

and then says that he was full of ambition and intrigue

To this accusation Griffith, evidently a man of rare

sense and good feeling, replies with eloquent, pathetic truth:

"Noble madam,
Men's evil manners live in brass; their virtues
We write in water. May it please your highness
To hear me speak his good now?"

Katharine mildly answers:

"Yes, good Griffith;
I were malicious else."

and he continues:

"This cardinal,
Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly
Was fashion'd to much honour from his cradle.
He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one:
Exceeding wise, fair-spoken, and persuading;
Lofty and sour to them that loved him not;
But to those men that sought him sweet as summer.
. . . . . .
In bestowing, madam,
He was most princely. Ever witness for him
Those twins of learning, that he raised in you,
Ipswich and Oxford! one of which fell with him,
Unwilling to outlive the good that rear'd it;
The other, though unfinish'd, yet so famous,
So excellent in art, and still so rising,
That Christendom shall ever speak his virtue.
His overthrow heap'd happiness upon him;
For then, and not till then, he felt himself,
And found the blessedness of being little;
And, to add greater honours to his age
Than man could give him, he died fearing God."

Katharine, affected by this description while in her weak state, freely forgives her former foe, or whom she thought so, and with deep sympathy rejoins:

"After my death I wish no other herald,
No other speaker of my living actions,
To keep mine honour from corruption,
But such an honest chronicler as Griffith.
Whom I most hated living, thou hast made me,
With thy religious truth and modesty,
Now in his ashes honour."

Then, addressing her female attendant, she says:

"Patience, be near me still; and set me lower:
I have not long to trouble thee. Good Griffith,
Cause the musicians play me that sad note
I named my knell, whilst I sit meditating
On that celestial harmony I go to."

She sleeps, and in dreamy vision, while the music continues, sees angels approach her with white garlands, while she, unconscious, holds out her hands. The music continues, and she wakes exclaiming, still under the influence of the vision:

"Spirits of peace, where are ye? are ye all gone,
And leave me here in wretchedness behind ye?"

Griffiths says:

"Madam, we are here,"

and she asks:

"Saw you not, even now, a blessed troop
Invite me to a banquet; whose bright faces
Cast thousand beams upon me, like the sun?
They promised me eternal happiness."

Griffith and Patience perceive the queen's altered appearance, as if near death, as she bids the music cease, and a gentleman is announced from the king, and proves to be a certain Capucius, ambassador, from the German emperor.

She asks:

"What is your pleasure with me?"

and he replies:

"Noble lady,
First, mine own service to your grace; the next,
The king's request that I would visit you;
Who grieves much for your weakness, and by me
Sends you his princely commendations,
And heartily entreats you take good comfort."

The poor broken-hearted queen sadly answers:

"O! my good lord, that comfort comes too late;
'Tis like a pardon after execution:
That gentle physic, given in time, had cured me;
But now I am past all comforts here but prayers."

Then her love for the king again inspiring her, she asks:

"How does his highness?"

and Capucius replies:

"Madam, in good health."

and she rejoins with the same devoted spirit she always evinced:

> "So may he ever do! and ever flourish,
> When I shall dwell with worms, and my poor name
> Banish'd the kingdom."

She then sends a letter to the king by Capucius, saying as she gives it to him:

> "I most humbly pray you to deliver
> This to my lord, the king.
> In which I have commended to his goodness
> The model of our chaste loves, his young daughter:
> Beseeching him to give her virtuous breeding."

She adds with melancholy fondness about the future queen, Mary Tudor, destined to behold, if not to cause a sad and sanguinary reign:

> "She is young, and of a noble, modest nature,'

and then petitions for all her faithful attendants, that they may obtain the king's bounty, foreseeing their distress when she is gone. This affecting entreaty Capucius promises to convey to the king, and Katharine then adds perhaps the most pathetic words of all. She well remembers how long the king had wished to be divorced, or legally separated from her, and anticipates the relief her departure from this world may bring him saying:

> "Remember me
> In all humility unto his highness:
> Say his long trouble now is passing
> Out of this world; tell him, in death I bless'd him,
> For so I will. Mine eyes grow dim. Farewell,
> My lord. Griffith, farewell,"

then calling her female attendants around her, she gives some last directions, and so this affecting scene ends, in which the abandoned queen, like nearly all Henry's subjects, no matter how he treats them, apparently loved and honoured this extraordinary tyrant to the last.

The next and last act is chiefly taken up with the religious rivalries now increasing about the English court, and which are not perhaps very clearly described in this

play, and apparently perplexed even some historians during this remarkable period of English history.[1]

Bishop Gardiner and many other noblemen and ecclesiastics distrust Cranmer, who is now succeeding Wolsey in influence over the king. Shakespeare represents Henry protecting his new favourite, Cranmer, from opposition and even insults on the part of his many foes, both lay and clerical. At this singular period of England's history, in which religious and political parties were so strangely mixed, the opposing factions might fairly enough form very different conclusions as to the motives or principles of the chief men in the state. Shakespeare in this involved play evidently tries to do justice to all, except to the king, of whom his description is certainly on the too favourable side. His noble sketch of Queen Katharine, a most devout Roman Catholic, would surely gratify those of her communion, while his pleasing accounts both of Anne Boleyn and of Cranmer, would likely please all Protestant readers. Bishop Gardiner, on whom so much blame, rightly or wrongly, is laid for religious persecution, is represented eagerly opposing Cranmer, now supported by Thomas Cromwell, Wolsey's former secretary, and who are both favoured by the capricious king.[2]

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[1] "Cranmer had secretly adopted the Protestant tenets. Norfolk adhered to the ancient faith, Gardiner lately created, Bishop of Winchester, had enlisted himself in the same party. Cromwell and Cranmer artfully made use of Henry's resentment to widen the breach with the See of Rome. Norfolk and Gardiner feigned an assent to the king's supremacy and to his renunciation of the sovereign pontiff, but they encouraged his passion for the Catholic faith. Both sides hoped by their unlimited compliance to bring him over to their party." —Hume's "History," chap. xxxi.

[2] "It is Henry on his throne who gives the sacred volume to Cranmer ere Cranmer and Cromwell can distribute it to the throng of priests and laymen below. Hitherto men had looked on religious truths as a gift from the Church. They were now to look on it as a gift from the king. The very gratitude of Englishmen for fresh spiritual enlightenment was to tell to the profit of the royal power. Nor was it possible for Henry himself to avoid drifting from the standpoint he had chosen. He had written against Luther; he had

In the play Cranmer is described as beset with enemies in the English court, but is befriended by Henry, who rebukes his chief foe, Gardiner, without actually punishing him. The Princess Elizabeth is born, and Shakespeare, as if wishing to enliven this grave, stately play with a comic scene, which could scarcely have really happened, though possible, introduces an old lady who talks like a nurse, and tells the king of the child's birth. As she and all the court well know Henry's great desire to have a son and heir, she announces the truth in a half-frightened, half-cunning manner. Henry eagerly asks her:

"Now, by thy looks
I guess thy message. Is the Queen deliver'd?
Say, ay; and of a boy."

Old Lady:

"Ay, ay, my liege:
And of a lovely boy: the God of heaven
Both now and ever bless her! 'Tis a girl,
Promises boys hereafter.
. . . . . .
'Tis as like you
As cherry is to cherry."

The evidently disappointed king says to his attendant, Lovell:

"Give her an hundred marks. I'll to the Queen,"

and goes out.

The old lady in a spirit more worthy of Mrs Gamp, or Betsy Prig, than of a ceremonious Court dame, at hearing this sum exclaims angrily:

"An hundred marks! By this light, I'll ha' more.
An ordinary groom is for such payment:
I will have more, or scold it out of him.
Said I for this the girl was like to him?
I will have more, or else unsay't; and now,
While it is hot, I'll put it to the issue,"

and off she goes apparently after the king, but what suc-

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persisted in opposing Lutheran doctrines; he had passed new laws to hinder the circulation of Lutheran books in his realm. But influences from without as from within drove him nearer to Lutheranism."—Green's "History of the English People," Book V., chap. iv.

cess her scolding had with Henry is very doubtful, though it is well known that he, while imperious and relentless towards the nobility, was usually familiar and indulgent with his subjects of lower degree. Yet it is unlikely that any one about the Court would use such language about such a king, and this little scene seems like the poet's invention to amuse himself or his readers.

Though the mutual distrust between Cranmer and Gardiner continued really unabated, Henry tried to make an apparent reconciliation between them when asking Cranmer to be godfather to the baby princess. Cranmer, devoted to the king, and high in favour with Anne and her friends, exclaims before the king, the assembled courtiers, statesmen, and Bishop Gardiner:

> "The greatest monarch now alive may glory
> In such an honour: how may I deserve it,
> That am a poor and humble subject to you?"

Henry gratified at this humble reply, and apparently in a merry mood, rejoins:

> "Come, come, my lord, you'd spare your spoons. You shall have
> Two noble partners with you; the old Duchess of Norfolk,
> And Lady Marquess Dorset: will these please you?"

Though Henry asks this question and seems to pause for an answer, Cranmer makes none, except probably by a humble bow, and Henry then addressing Gardiner, says:

> "Once more, my Lord of Winchester, I charge you,
> Embrace and love this man."

Before such a sovereign neither prelate dares express his real sentiments about the other, and Gardiner compels himself to say:

> "With a true heart
> And brother love I do it."

and Cranmer exclaims:

> "And let heaven
> Witness, how dear I hold this confirmation."

At this time Gardiner and Cranmer to some extent represent the opposing parties of English Roman Catholics

and Protestants. The former influence is waning, while that of the latter, aided by the new Queen's party, is increasing, yet still there is much uncertainty and constant intrigues while the popular despot reigns supreme. Henry impatient, or pretending to be so, for the coming christening rejoins:

> "Come, lords, we trifle time away; I long
> To have this young one made a Christian.
> As I have made ye one, lords, one remain;
> So I grow stronger, you more honour gain."

All who hear him at least pretend to believe and trust him; his complete ascendancy over all his subjects of high or low degree is evident alike in this play and in the pages of history. No royal rival opposed him, and republican revolt was apparently never apprehended. At this time all parties obeyed the king, uniting in himself the claims of the houses of York and Lancaster on English loyalty.[1]

There is no mention of Henry's excommunication by the Pope in this play; Shakespeare evidently avoids writing anything that could offend either Roman Catholic or Protestant readers. He dwells chiefly towards the end on the most cheerful and important events of this extraordinary reign, and the next scene after the reconciliation of Gardiner and Cranmer is near the palace yard among a crowd of London people assembled together to catch sight of the King and Queen. A porter and his servant describe

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[1] "There never was Prince more delighted in Interviews or generally came off better from them. To which also as his goodly personage and excellent qualities did much dispose him; so they gave him a particular advantage and lustre."—Lord Herbert of Cherbury's "Life of Henry VIII.," p. 571. The same writer supplies this formidable list of Henry's victims: "Two Queens, one Cardinal or two (for Poole was condemned though absent), Dukes, Marquises, Earls, and Earls' sons, twelve; Barons and Knights, eighteen; Abbots, Priors, Monks and Priests, seventy-seven; of the more common sort between one religion and another, huge multitudes. He gave some proofs yet that he could forgive, though as they were few and late, they served not to recover him the name of a clement Prince," p. 572.

the noisy, but loyal London mob, whose enthusiasm they cannot keep within the bounds of order. The porter asks:

"How got they in, and be hanged?"

and his man answers:

"I know not; how gets the tide in?
As much as one sound cudgel of four foot,
You see the poor remainder, could distribute,
I made no spare, sir."

The porter, evidently strict and anxious to keep everyone and everything in good order, pettishly answers:

"You did nothing, sir,"

and his subordinate replies, protesting:

"I am not Samson, nor Sir Guy, nor Colbrand,
To mow 'em down before me;

. . . . . .

They fell on; I made good my place; at length they came to the broomstaff to me; I defied 'em still; when suddenly a file of boys behind 'em, loose shot, delivered such a shower of pebbles, that I was fain to draw mine honour in, and let 'em win the work. The devil was amongst 'em, I think surely."

To this account the porter replies:

"These are the youths that thunder at a play-house, and fight for bitten apples. . . . . I have some of 'em in *Limbo Patrum*, and they are like to dance these three days; besides the running banquet of two beadles, that is to come."

The Lord Chamberlain now arrives in his turn, scolding the porter for not keeping better order about the palace precincts, and exclaiming:

"Mercy o' me, what a multitude are here!
They grow still, too, from all parts they are coming,
As if we kept a fair here!
. . . . . .
We shall have
Great store of room, no doubt, left for the ladies,
When they pass back from the christening.
. . . . . .
As I live,
If the king blame me for't, I'll lay ye all
By the heels, and suddenly;
. . . . . .
Hark! the trumpets sound:
They're come already from the christening.
Go, break among the press, and find a way out
To let the troop pass fairly, or I'll find
A Marshalsea shall hold ye play these two months."

Shakespeare evidently enjoys describing the loyalty of the London populace on all public occasions, and gives a detailed account of the royal procession with a careful exactness apparently worthy of an eager monarchist taking real pleasure in describing at length all royal ceremonies and pageants.

The next and final scene is in the palace where Cranmer pronounces a benediction on the infant princess. He exclaims to the king and all present in words which Shakespeare evidently means to be prophetic:

"This royal infant, heaven still move about her!
Though in her cradle, yet now promises
Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,
Which time shall bring to ripeness; she shall be
(But few now living can behold that goodness),
A pattern to all princes living with her;
And all that shall succeed, . . . truth shall nurse her;
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her;
She shall be lov'd and fear'd."

Shakespeare, never mentioning the chance of her having a brother, and knowing that James First will succeed her, proceeds to describe her successor in the same spirit of loyal enthusiasm:

"So shall she leave her blessedness to one
When heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness,
Who from the sacred ashes of her honour,
Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was,
And so stand fix'd. Peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,
That were the servants to this chosen infant,
Shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him:
Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,
His honour and the greatness of his name
Shall be, and make new nations; he shall flourish,
And, like a mountain cedar, reach his branches
To all the plains about him; our children's children
Shall see this and bless heaven."

This enthusiastic prophecy surprises as well as delights Henry, who evidently believing it, exclaims:

"Thou speakest wonders!"

and Cranmer rejoins again alluding to the infant princess' long life and reign:

"She shall be, to the happiness of England,
An aged princess; many days shall see her,
And yet no day without a deed to crown it."

He then in language alike true, impressive, and pathetic, concludes:

> "Would I had known no more! but she must die,
> She must, the saints must have her; yet a virgin;
> A most unspotted lily shall she pass
> To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her."

These noble words produce evidently the desired impression on the gratified king. At this moment, and indeed during all his reign, Henry seems to have felt little, if any, remorse, or even interest about his former friends and subjects. The noble Buckingham, the learned Wolsey, the virtuous Queen Katharine, all more or less the victims of his relentless and imperious will, seem alike soon banished from his memory. He is now with a new Queen and new confidants, as if beginning his royal life over again, and joyfully replies to Cranmer's eloquence:

> "O lord Archbishop!
> Thou hast made me now a man: never before
> This happy child, did I get anything
> This oracle of comfort has so pleased me."

He then seems to anticipate his own future with rather more than justifiable confidence:

> "That, when I am in heaven, I shall desire
> To see what this child does, and praise my Maker.
> I thank ye all—To you, my good lord mayor,
> And your good brethren, I am much beholden,
> I have received much honour by your presence,
> And ye shall find me thankful. Lead the way, lords:
> Ye must all see the queen, and she must thank ye:
> . . . . . .
> This day, no man think
> Has business at his house; for all shall stay:
> This little one shall make it holiday."

These eloquent words to some extent came to pass, "this little one" became the proud Queen of England, and all written in this last scene seems meant to gratify her and her loyal subjects. With this christening of the Princess Elizabeth, Shakespeare ends his magnificent and really instructive Play. No hint is given of the terrible years that follow this beautiful scene. No reader ignorant of history could indeed imagine that the beautiful and

honoured young queen, Anne Boleyn, together with many of her friends and relations were to be publicly executed at the pleasure of the vindictive and selfish tyrant who by Heaven's will presided over the fate of so many illustrious English men and English women at this period. Shakespeare leaves this despotic ruler, popular, if not loved, and certainly feared throughout all England, without the least murmur of revolt or even remonstrance against his sole undisputed authority. Probably no English sovereign, perhaps no sovereign in any country, was so thoroughly successful during a most eventful reign, obeyed by so many illustrious subjects and gratifying his capricious feelings and desires, not only with impunity, but with undiminished popularity. His reign in some respects was one of the most interesting as well as the most important in English history. Shakespeare only describes its early and most prosperous years and prudently abstains from alluding to most of the crimes which attended it. The curtain falls on this grand Play with the christening of the princess and the general rejoicing of the court and the nation now completely united.

The chief characters seem all, or nearly all, described in a friendly, if not admiring spirit. The friends or relations of the opposing queens and rival statesmen in this grand Play might read it with almost equal gratification. Henry himself, the terrible arbiter of their destinies in this world, is only described in his best moments, not a word against him is ever uttered, except one brief reproach by Wolsey, which being historical, Shakespeare had no hesitation in recording.

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[1] "He possessed indeed great vigour of mind, which qualified him for exercising dominion over men, courage, intrepidity, vigilance, inflexibility, and everyone dreaded a contest with a man who was never known to yield or to forgive. It may seem a little extraordinary that notwithstanding his cruelty, his extortion, his violence, his arbitrary administration, this prince not only acquired the regard of his subjects, but never was the object of their hatred. He seems even in some degree to have possessed to the last their love and affection." —Hume's "History," chap. xxxiii.

This whole Play was evidently meant to please as well as to interest all loyal English readers. The many grand historical personages are shown as in a living panorama, arousing not only interest but usually admiration in all who read about them. The philosophic poet leaves Henry VIII. his Court and young Queen enjoying a most delightful and pleasing occasion, during one of those rare brief periods indeed of human life when to quote the words of an eminent novelist: "The brief sunshine of the world is blazing full upon them."[1]

[1] Charles Dickens, in ending the "Pickwick Papers."

KING LEAR.

IN this most powerful and perhaps most pathetic of all Shakespeare's tragedies, he apparently has very little, if any, historical evidence to guide him. He depends almost entirely on his own unequalled mind for the production of this grandest of tragedies. Perhaps no other play shows such amazing contrasts in imaginary characters, yet unlike most of his works the interest of this tragedy depends largely, if not chiefly, on its female personages. It does not seem surely founded on any well-authenticated legend, but merely to rest upon a vague tradition, probably founded on some facts, which could not be altogether verified even in Shakespeare's time. This play in its true nature is well, though perhaps unintentionally, described, by one of our greatest modern English novelists in these expressive words:

"Shakespeare derived some of his plots from old tales and legends in general circulation; he brought within the magic circle of his genius, traditions peculiarly adapted for his purpose and turned familiar things into constellations which should enlighten the world for ages."[1] These words of Dickens' young hero probably expressed that writer's own opinion of plays like *King Lear*, which, having no actual historic foundation owe their lasting charm and permanent value to Shakespeare's genius alone. Unlike Sir Walter Scott who often heads his chapters in the "Waverley Novels" with quotations from Shakespeare, Mr Dickens rarely mentions the poet, which may render the pleasing allusion to him in Nickleby, the more remarkable. Shake-

[1] "Nicholas Nickleby," ch. xvi. vol. ii.

speare, to use Dickens' words, has indeed "enlightened the world for ages," and in *King Lear* his chief object seems to be to portray the fatal folly of yielding to violent temper or selfish vanity. None perhaps of Shakespeare's plays is in these respects more worthy of earnest study. King Lear himself is the almost despotic sovereign of a great part of England, if not all of it, but of England alone, no mention being made of Scotland or of Wales, and France is evidently both friendly and independent at this fanciful period of remote English history. The play begins with a short interview between the Earls of Kent and of Gloster, two noblemen in Lear's palace, and Gloster's illegitimate son Edmund. The few words that they say are important, considering the future of the play. King Lear has three daughters—Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia, but no son, all about to be married, and Kent hears from Gloster that in the approaching marriages Lear's two English sons-in-law, the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall, are equally favoured by him, despite their opposite characters. Albany is a noble and generous man, and Cornwall a relentless tyrant. While these English nobles are about to wed Goneril and Regan, the younger sister Cordelia is proposed for by the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy. The names of these three princesses rather represent or indicate their characters. There is something harsh in the very names of Goneril and Regan, while Cordelia in its melodious sound expresses or indicates comparative amiability. Gloster in reply to Kent, who hoped Albany was more in favour than Cornwall with King Lear, says:

"It appears not which of the dukes he, [Lear,] values most; for equalities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety."

Then Kent, evidently impressed by young Edmund's handsome appearance, asks:

"Is not this your son, my lord?"

to which query Gloster rather dubiously replies:

"His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it. . . . Do you smell a fault?"

Kent at once perceiving his meaning frankly replies, evidently admiring all that he sees or knows of Edmund:

"I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper."

Gloster continues:

"But I have a son, sir, by order of law,
Some year elder than this, who yet is no
Dearer in my account. . . .
. . . . . .
Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?"

Edmund replies:

"No, my lord."

His father informs him:

"My Lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my honourable friend."

Edmund in apparent dutifulness exclaims:

"My services to your lordship."

Kent good-naturedly rejoins:

"I must love you, and sue to know you better."

While Edmund meekly replies:

"Sir, I shall study deserving."

Neither Gloster nor Kent have the least idea of the true character of the dangerous, deceitful young man before them. With a consummate duplicity worthy of Richard III., Edmund, with assumed meekness, hears his illegitimacy mentioned by his father in coarse terms, yet expressing preference for him instead of for his elder and legitimate brother Edgar, whom he has hitherto contrived to completely surpass in their father's regard. His assumed deference or humility in this short scene should be well remembered, considering the terrible part this vindictive, relentless young man plays in this tragedy, of which, indeed, he is the evil spirit throughout.

The next scene introduces most of the chief personages assembled together in Lear's palace. The old king himself presides with his three daughters, the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall, and the Earls of Kent and Gloster. It is

between these dukes that England is to be in fact divided, as Lear intends abdicating while the rulers of France and Burgundy, rival suitors for Cordelia, are not present, but are about the Court and soon appear. Lear orders Gloster to attend upon these foreign princes. The latter obediently departs with his son Edmund. Then Lear resolves to acquaint the assembled Court with his future intentions. First asking for a map of England, he proceeds evidently quite absolute in disposing of his dominions:

"Know that we have divided
In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburden'd crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughter's several dowers, that future strife
May be prevented now. The princes, France and Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
And here are to be answer'd."

He then addresses his three daughters with almost a childish longing for praise, love, and thanks, contrasting strangely with his precise, practical words on other subjects:

"Tell me, my daughters, . . .
. . . . . .
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,
Our eldest-born, speak first."

Goneril and Regan, who probably have prepared their dutiful pleasing speeches, well knowing their excitable father's imperious and passionate temper, are alike resolved to gratify his weaknesses, both knowing how to influence him, and Goneril, therefore, enthusiastically replies:

"Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;
Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty;
Beyond what can be valu'd, rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;
Beyond all manner of so much love I love you."

Cordelia, well knowing the real characters of her two sisters, only murmurs to herself at hearing these fulsome professions:

"What shall Cordelia do? Love and be silent."

The old king, delighted at Goneril's words, exhibits the map of England, and with almost doting pleasure exclaims:

"Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,
With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady: to thine and Albany's issue
Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter,
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak."

It may seem incredible how completely Goneril and Regan have up to this time deceived their father as to their real characters. In actual life such successful deceit carried to such an extent, would scarcely be possible, yet Shakespeare persists in his consistent description. Regan, in every way like Goneril, replies in the same style:

"I am made of that self-same metal as my sister,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;
Only she comes too short: that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
And find I am alone felicitate
In your dear highness' love."

Again, Cordelia knowing the real feelings and motives of her odious sisters, says to herself, anticipating the coming test to her own truth and love:

"Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so; since I am sure my love's
More richer than my tongue."

Lear as gratified with Regan's fulsome assurances, as with those of Goneril, exclaims with eager delight, evidently anxious to reward them:

"To thee and thine, hereditary ever,
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,
Than that conferr'd on Goneril."

He pauses and then says certainly with real fondness for the time:

"Now, our joy,
Although our last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interest'd; what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak."

Cordelia, unmoved by temptation and herself the incarnation of truth and modesty, replies:

"Nothing, my lord."

Lear retorts:

"Nothing will come of nothing: speak again."

Cordelia thus pressed answers with mild humility:

"Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond; no more nor less."

Lear, impatient, irritable, and disappointed at these words after hearing so many warm expressions of love from his other daughters, exclaims:

"How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little,
Lest you may mar your fortunes."

Cordelia, probably apprehending her father's wrath, yet resolved to be truthful at all hazards, calmly replies:

"Good, my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all."

This beautiful answer, so truthful, modest and really dutiful, only irritates or bewilders Lear, as he hardly seems to understand it. He asks if she is in earnest, and being sure she is, exclaims in rather confused anger:

"So young, and so untender."

She meekly replies:

"So young, my lord, and true."

At this mild and yet firm reply, Lear losing all self-control, as if fancying himself insulted, exclaims with almost reckless anger:

"Let it be so; thy truth then be thy dower
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun . .
. . . . . .
Here I disclaim all my paternal care . . .
. . . . . .
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this for ever."

He proceeds in furious denunciation when his faithful subject, Kent, bravely ventures to remonstrate exclaiming:

"Good, my liege."

Lear, not wishing to hear him in his senseless anger, interrupts him:

"Peace, Kent!
Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
I loved her most, and thought to set my rest
On her kind nursery."

Then addressing Cordelia, who does not immediately obey, Lear exclaims:

"Hence, and avoid my sight!
So be my grave my peace, as here I give
Her father's heart from her."

He then sends for the foreign princes, and before they enter thus addresses his English future sons-in-law:

"Cornwall and Albany,
With my two daughters' dowers digest this third."

Then with passionate reference to poor Cordelia he adds:

"Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her;"

and continues:

"I do invest you jointly with my power,
Pre-eminence, and all the large effects
That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course,
With reservation of an hundred knights,
By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode
Make with you by due turn. Only we shall retain
The name and all the addition to a king;

The sway, revenue, execution of the rest,
Beloved sons, be yours: which to confirm,
This coronet part between you."

And he presents the two dukes with the crown in formal ceremony. Here Kent, truly faithful to his impetuous old king, and well knowing the real characters of the three princesses, again tries to remonstrate in loyal pathetic words:

"Royal Lear,
Whom I have ever honoured as my king,
Loved as my father, as my master followed,
As my great patron thought on in my prayers."

Lear interrupts, unable indeed to contradict a word, yet full of selfish rage and petulance, exclaiming in assumed sarcasm:

"The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft."

Kent as fearless, as honest, nobly replies:

"Let it fall rather, though the fork invade,
The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly,
When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?
Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound
When majesty stoops to folly. Reverse thy doom;
And, in thy best consideration, check
This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
Reverbs no hollowness."

To these just and noble words the infatuated old king rejoins in a burst of passion:

"Kent, on thy life, no more."

His dutiful subject replies in language which might well have conciliated any offended king in his senses:

"My life I never held but as a pawn
To wage against thine enemies; nor fear to lose it,
Thy safety being the motive."

Yet all his past services and true loyalty are at this excited moment of no avail. Lear, almost frantic with anger, exclaims:

"Out of my sight."

Kent mildly, yet firmly, attempts to remonstrate again with his vehement sovereign :

> " See better, Lear ; and let me still remain
> The true blank of thine eye."

Lear replies like a Pagan monarch of Greece or Rome :

> " Now, by Apollo."

Kent, in his turn, now interrupts, being doubtless grieved and alarmed beyond his patience :

> " Now, by Apollo, king,
> Thou swear'st thy gods in vain."

Lear in a fury, and impetuous as a youth, lays his hand on his sword, exclaiming for the moment in threatening anger :

> " Oh, vassal ! miscreant ! "

Even Albany and Cornwall think best to interfere, and exclaim :

> " Dear sir, forbear."

While the fearless Kent proceeds, almost inviting death at the hand of his passionate master :

> " Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow
> Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift ;
> Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
> I'll tell thee thou dost evil."

Kent's vehemence, though surely excusable in a faithful and tried loyal subject, only exasperates Lear in his present excited state of mind, and he sternly replies :

> " Hear me, recreant !
> On thine allegiance, hear me ! "

This solemn adjuration commands Kent's silence, and his arbitrary master wholly misled by selfish passion, continues :

> " Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow,
> Which we durst never yet, and with strained pride
> To come betwixt our sentence and our power . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . Take thy reward,
> Five days we do allot thee for provision
> To shield thee from diseases of the world ;

> And on the sixth to turn thy hated back
> Upon our kingdom : if on the tenth day following
> Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
> The moment is thy death. Away ! By Jupiter,
> This shall not be revok'd."

It may seem strange that Lear and others always appeal to the classic deities instead of to those of ancient Britain, who are never mentioned. Lear's power at this time seems absolute, no remonstrance or remark is offered by any of the assembled Court, and Kent himself replies in submissive, patient resignation :

> " Fare thee well, king ; sith thus thou wilt appear,
> Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here."

Then addressing Cordelia whose merit he well understands :

> " The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
> That justly think'st, and hath most rightly said ! "

Then to Goneril and Regan whom he understands equally well :

> " And your large speeches may your deeds approve,
> That good effects may spring from words of love."

Lastly, addressing all others except Lear and his daughters, this faithful subject and true noble exclaims :

> " Thus Kent, oh princes ! bids you all adieu,
> He'll shape his old course in a country new."

and departs, Cordelia apparently not daring to utter a word of thanks, while the other nobles and courtiers are mute before the angry, despotic old king. Gloster, a man not unlike Kent in truth and honour, now re-enters introducing the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy, whom Lear formally addresses on the trying subject of their proposals to marry Cordelia. Burgundy, evidently a worldly, selfish prince, expects the dower formerly promised or insinuated as Cordelia's marriage portion, and Lear replies :

> " But now her price is fall'n. Sir, there she stands :
> If aught within that little seeming substance,
> Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,
> And nothing more, may fitly like your grace,
> She's there, and she is yours."

Burgundy, astonished, owns he knows not what to answer, and Lear angrily proceeds:

"Will you, with those infirmities she owes,
Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,
Dower'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath,
Take her, or leave her?"

Burgundy meanly answers in a way which proves how little his love is worth:

"Pardon me, royal sir;
Election makes not up on such conditions."

And Lear then addressing the French King, a suitor of higher rank, and of far nobler character, says respectfully:

"For you, great king,
I would not from your love make such a stray
To match you, where I hate; therefore beseech you
To avert your liking a more worthier way
Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed
Almost to acknowledge hers."

To this burst of petulant, impetuous anger the French king responds in a spirit worthy of the reputation of his chivalrous nation:

"This is most strange,
That she, who even but now was your best object,
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time
Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
So many folds of favour."

These sympathetic words evidently encourage Cordelia to make a last appeal for mere justice to her vehement headstrong father:

"I yet beseech your majesty, . . .
. . . . . .
. . . that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
That hath deprived me of your grace and favour,
But even for want of that for which I am richer,
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue
That I am glad I have not, though not to have it
Hath lost me in your liking."

To this modest, pathetic appeal so mild, truthful and

affecting, the old king completely yielding to his selfish pride or obstinacy, yet unable to contradict her words, makes a truly contemptible answer, but which doubtless expresses his mind at present:

> "Better thou
> Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better."

Then the King of France in a spirit worthy of the French heroes in the age of chivalry, and evidently shocked as well as astounded at Lear's senseless anger with Cordelia, indignantly asks:

> "Is it but this? a tardiness in nature
> Which often leaves the history unspoke
> That it intends to do?"

He then asks Burgundy if he refuses to marry Cordelia, to which that worldly, if not avaricious, prince replies by asking Lear if he will give Cordelia what he had before named, in which case he will espouse her. Lear sternly repeats that he will give her nothing, and Burgundy heartlessly addresses Cordelia:

> "I am sorry, then, you have so lost a father
> That you must lose a husband."

And she replies with that calm good sense which always distinguishes her:

> "Peace be with Burgundy!
> Since that respects of fortune are his love,
> I shall not be his wife."

It is at this important crisis of her life when Cordelia seems abandoned by her angry father, and rejected by her cold-hearted, unworthy suitor, that the French King in noble words indicates the true generosity of his nature. He probably has anticipated what Burgundy, his neighbour abroad, would likely do in the event of no fortune in his intended bride, and being evidently deeply impressed by Cordelia's real merit and cruel treatment, addresses her in words of generosity and truth:

> "Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;
> Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despised!
> Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:
> Be it lawful I take up what's cast away . . .
> . . . . . .
> Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance
> Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France."

Lear, still infuriated, replies with stern bitterness:

> "Thou hast her, France; let her be thine, for we
> Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
> That face of hers again; therefore be gone
> Without our grace, our love, our benison.
> Come, noble Burgundy."

The angry king departs with his two future sons-in-law, Albany and Cornwall, together with Gloster and attendants, leaving the three princesses alone with the French King who, with the courtesy of his nation asks Cordelia to bid her sisters farewell. She, well knowing their real characters, apprehending the worst and fearing for her old father's welfare, when left in their power, mildly addresses them:

> "The jewels of our father, with washed eyes
> Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are;
> And like a sister am most loth to call
> Your faults as they are named. Use well our father:
> To your professed bosoms I commit him:
> But yet, alas! stood I within his grace,
> I would prefer him to a better place.
> So farewell to you both."

They reply scornfully, well knowing how thoroughly, up to this time, they have each succeeded in deceiving their father.

Goneril:

> "Prescribe not us our duties,"

and Regan, in the same hardened spirit but with an additional sneer, says:

> "Let your study
> Be to content your lord, who hath received you
> At fortune's alms."

The King of France departs then with Cordelia leaving Goneril and Regan alone together, who for the present quite agreed reveal their characters in a brief conversation. Goneril alluding to her father contemptuously exclaims:

> "I think our father will hence to-night,"

and Regan replies:

> ". . . And with you; next month with us."

Goneril scornfully says:

"You see how full of changes his age is; . . . he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly."

Regan with equal scorn for her father, derived from their long experience of his passionate temper, replies:

"'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself."

Goneril now steadily contemplating the future of their lives, thus warns Regan, intimating the same utter contempt for their trustful, misjudging father:

"The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look to receive from his age, not alone the imperfections of long-engraffed condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them."

Regan quite agreeing with her observes:

"Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment."

Goneril rejoins proposing they should "hit together," and adds:

". . . If our father carry authority with such disposition as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us. . . . We must do something, and i' the heat."

They evidently disapprove already of their father's future arrangements about his independent body of knights, and alike contemplate opposing them when the proper time comes. Thus allied in spirit and interest Goneril and Regan are for the present of one mind.

The next scene again presents Edmund, the evil genius of this tragedy, in Gloster's house with a letter he has written or got written purporting to be from his legitimate brother, Edgar, to himself. Edmund intends showing it to their father, Gloster, hoping that its contents will enrage the latter against Edgar. On the whole Edmund is certainly one of the worst of Shakespeare's villains, not even excepting Iago, yet, unlike him, seems naturally fitted for better things. He is brave, intelligent, handsome, and pleasing, but the sense of illegitimacy constantly weighs on his thoughtful

mind, embitters his temper, and alienates him completely from both father and brother, who hitherto love and trust him. His character and designs, like those of Iago and Richard III., are chiefly indicated in soliloquy, as like them he seems to have no close confidant until he captivates both Goneril and Regan. He now exclaims to himself, reflecting on his birth, fortunes, qualities, and the forged letter:

"Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother?"

Then angrily remembering that his illegitimacy places him socially below his physical and mental inferiors, he continues in moody, suppressed wrath:

". . . Why bastard? wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base."

Edmund, unlike most villains here boasts of his alleged generosity of mind, a virtue he certainly never shows, being the complete incarnation throughout this terrible play of the most consummate hypocrisy, deceit and cold-blooded cruelty. He proceeds, revealing his wicked designs to himself alone, when sarcastically alluding to his elder brother whom he wishes to supplant:

". . . Well, then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land."

He owns that his father prefers himself, but seems incapable of gratitude:

"Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to the legitimate. Fine word, 'legitimate'!
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top the legitimate."

Then full of confidence in his own powers of deceit he

adds, with a strange address to the heathen gods though he is apparently an atheist:

> "I grow, I prosper;
> Now, gods, stand up for bastards."

At this moment his father, Gloster, enters, astonished and alarmed at recent events, like all other true subjects of the old king. He excitedly exclaims while quite trusting his false son, Edmund:

> "Kent banish'd thus! And France in choler parted!
> And the king gone to-night! subscribed his power!
> Confined to exhibition.[1] All this done
> Upon the gad! Edmund, how now! what news?"

Edmund eagerly pretending to hide his forged letter in a way to attract Gloster's notice, replies there is none, when his father asks what the paper is that he is hiding. Edmund replies it is nothing; and Gloster, his curiosity fully aroused as Edmund intended, eagerly asks in a very practical way:

"What needed then that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? the quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see: come; if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles."

Edmund owns it is a letter from Edgar to himself, but not fit for their father to read; Gloster is the more eager to see it, and insists on Edmund giving it him, which he does with feigned reluctance, observing:

"I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue."

Glos. (reads), "This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. . . . If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother.

"EDGAR."

Gloster shocked and astonished exclaims:

"My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? a heart and brain to breed it in? When came this to you? Who brought it?"

---

[1] Allowance.

Edmund well prepared with falsehoods and probably expecting these questions, artfully replies:

"It was not brought me, my lord; there's the cunning of it; I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet."

Gloster asks:

"You know the character to be your brother's?"

to which young Edmund, with a base cunning worthy of Iago, readily replies:

"If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his; but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not. . . . It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents."

Gloster eagerly asks:

"Has he never before sounded you in this business?"

and Edmund answers with consummate duplicity:

"Never, my lord; but I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue."

Gloster evidently a hasty man, and additionally excited by the late events, at once believes Edmund thoroughly, and convinced of Edgar's guilt exclaims in horrified apprehension:

"O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter? Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him; I'll apprehend him. Abominable villain? Where is he?"

Edmund replies:

"I do not well know, my lord,"

and for some time pretends to soothe his father, then makes a suggestion:

". . . I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction."

Gloster agrees, adding:

"Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him, I pray you: frame the business after your own wisdom."

Edmund promises to do so, and Gloster, apparently bewildered between public and private troubles, happening, as it were all at once, yields to superstitious fancies, which,

considering his own age, circumstances, and trying position, seems in him natural enough, and he exclaims before the apparently dutiful, but really treacherous and sardonic Edmund:

"These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the king falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time."

He remembers his own troubles and exclaims:

"Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing: do it carefully."

Then reverting to public affairs, he concludes:

"And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his offence, honesty! 'Tis strange."

Evidently King Lear, though perhaps wayward or passionate, has greatly changed recently, and thus his two elderly courtiers, Kent and Gloster, friendly to each other, and thoroughly loyal to him, are alike shocked and alarmed at the violence of his late conduct. Gloster, grieved and perplexed, departs, leaving Edmund alone in triumph at the success of his deceit, and ridiculing his father's fancies. He exclaims in scorn when there is none to hear him:

"This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeit of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence, and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on."

These philosophic remarks he utters while contemplating the ruin of his confiding father and brother, with the utter callousness of his merciless nature, and continues:

"An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star."

He sees or hears his brother approaching, and exclaims

to himself, preparing his deceitful mind for the coming interview:

"Edgar . . . my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o'Bedlam."

He then rather imitates his father, exclaiming doubtless like a good actor with all the appearance of mental sorrow or anxiety:

"Oh! these eclipses do portend these divisions:—Fa, sol, la mi."

Edgar, evidently surprised at his shrewd brother's low spirits, and apparent melancholy, asks:

"How now, brother Edmund! What serious contemplation are you in?"

Edmund pretends to share their father's idea that the late eclipses portend most human misfortunes, while Edgar, amused and incredulous, asks:

"Do you busy yourself with that?"

And the other, with assumed apprehension, replies he had lately read that the effects of the eclipses

"succeed unhappily; as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state; menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what."

Edgar, perhaps amused and quite unsuspicious, asks:

"How long have you been a sectary astronomical?"

Edmund, apparently perceiving that his brother hardly believes him, abruptly changes the subject and asks:

"Come come; when saw you my father last?"

Edg. "The night gone by."

Edm. "Spake you with him?"

Edg. "Ay, two hours together."

Edm. "Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word nor countenance?"

Edg. "None at all."

Edm. "Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him; and at my entreaty forbear his presence until some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure which at this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay."

Edgar, astonished and thoroughly trusting his false brother, truthfully and innocently exclaims:

"Some villain hath done me wrong,"

when the treacherous Edmund readily retorts:

"That's my fear,"

and then advises Edgar with all appearance of friendship to always be armed and very cautious, saying also that he will bring him to some place where he will surely hear his father speak. Edgar quite trusts him, and departs when his villainous brother again, like Iago and Richard III., reveals his wicked thoughts and designs in cold-blooded and crafty soliloquy:

"A credulous father, and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy."[1]

He exults in perceiving how thoroughly he is trusted by father and brother alike, and resolves to make certain profit out of their misplaced confidence:

". . . I see the business.
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit."

It seems hardly possible that Edmund should up to this time have so utterly deceived both relations old and young who must have known him all his life. Yet this imaginary deceit is in this respect somewhat verified by the historical instance of Richard III., who certainly deceived his elder brother, Clarence, and most of the nobles about his brother King Edward's court, with a success almost like that of a fiend, deceiving fallible, misjudging men. Edmund now stands as it were between his father and brother trusted by both, with neither fortune nor

[1] Iago expresses almost the same idea about his dupe, Othello:—

"The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose,
As asses are."—*Othello, Act 1st; Scene 1st.*

position, yet calmly resolved on their destruction, and by that means hopes to obtain all they have.

The next scene is in Albany's palace when his wife, the Princess Goneril, with her steward, Oswald, her unscrupulous instrument, enters. She asks him in rising anger if her father had struck one of her attendants for chiding his jester, and Oswald says he did. This jester or fool as he is usually termed, unlike most of his class, has little opportunity for being either merry or witty in this tragic story. He is devoted to Lear and Cordelia, and at present with the King in Goneril's palace is probably not very well treated. Goneril now resolving to deprive her helpless father of all comfort as well as power, works herself up into stern rage which well displays her odious nature. She exclaims before her obedient steward, Oswald, alluding to Lear:

> "By day and night he wrongs me; every hour
> He flashes into one gross crime or other,
> That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it:
> His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
> On every trifle."

Then addressing Oswald:

> "When he returns from hunting
> I will not speak with him; say I am sick:
> If you come slack of former services,
> You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer."

Oswald, eager to obey her, exclaims:

> "He's coming, madam; I hear him."

Hunting horns are heard announcing Lear's return from his kingly sport, and Goneril gives her subordinates the following directions:

> "Put on what weary negligence you please,
> You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question:
> If he distaste it, let him to my sister,
> Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
> Not to be over-ruled."

Then recalling her trustful infatuated father she scornfully exclaims:

"Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,
Old fools are babes again, and must be used
With checks as flatteries. . . .
Remember what I have said."

Oswald obediently answers:

"Well, madam?"

while she gives more directions:

"And let his knights have colder looks among you.
. . . I'll write straight to my sister
To hold my very course."

She departs with her attendant, and Kent in disguise appears in a hall of the palace. This faithful subject of his kind but passionate king foresees the latter's future treatment from such ladies as Goneril and Regan, now sharing supreme power between them, and with true devotion says to himself:

". . . Now, banish'd Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
So may it come, thy master, whom thou lovest,
Shall find thee full of labours."

Lear now enters with attendants from hunting, with a sportsman's appetite, hurriedly ordering dinner, and without recognising Kent in disguise, asks him questions, likes his answers, and promises him employment. Meantime Oswald enters, obeying his mistress in trying to provoke Lear, when the latter asks where Goneril is he refuses to answer, and when called goes carelessly away. This is perhaps the first time that Lear, evidently accustomed to implicit obedience, perceives himself neglected, and one of his knights observes truly:

"My lord, . . . to my judgment, your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont; there's a great abatement of kindness appears as well in the general dependents as in the duke himself also and your daughter."

Lear avows he has perceived some slight disrespect towards him, says he will look further into it, and then impatiently calls for his jester, who was wont to amuse him,

and whom he has not seen for two days. His attendant impressively observes :

"Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool hath much pined away."

This is natural enough considering her kindness, while the stern tempers of Goneril and Regan were not likely to favour the poor jester. Lear stirred by these words recalling Cordelia, yet ashamed to own the regret he begins to feel for his injustice to her, replies with suppressed grief :

"No more of that ; I have noted it well. Go you and tell my daughter I would speak with her." [*Exit an attendant.*

While longing to be amused he sends another attendant to summon his jester. Oswald re-enters, and Lear haughtily asks :

"Oh ! you sir, you, come you hither, sir. Who am I, sir ?"

This question Oswald is well prepared to answer, and he replies :

"My lady's father,"

and the enraged old king feeling himself insulted strikes him. The blow, though likely not a heavy one from so old a man, Oswald resents, exclaiming :

"I'll not be struck, my lord,"

when Kent retorts :—

"Nor tripped neither, you base football player."
[*Tripping up his heels.*

Lear thanks Kent for this service, who pushes Oswald out, when the fool enters, apparently an affectionate though half silly youth, devoted to Lear and Cordelia, but incapable of serving any one except by singing and making jokes. This lad, a petted favourite of Lear's, is yet able under the guise of partly assumed imbecility to tell Lear more home truths than any one else could, without a risk of giving offence. After some light talk, the poor fool brings about the subject of all their thoughts in a few lines, which, though coming from a jester, are now more sad than comic. He can say anything he likes to the old king,

whom he treats almost like a comrade, and after a little while comes to the point by asking:

"Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?"

Lear. "No, lad; teach me."

And the fool wittily replies, though with a mournful and practical meaning:

"That lord that counsell'd thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me,
Or do thou for him stand:
The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear;
The one in motley here,
The other found out there."

He either looks or points at Lear, who indulgently asks:

"Dost thou call me fool, boy?"

and the jester truly replies:

"All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou was born with."

Kent thoughtfully observes to Lear, well knowing the fool, who never recognises him:

"This is not altogether fool, my lord,"

to which words the fool, with a faint sparkle of his professional merriment, replies:

"No, faith, lords and great men will not let me; if I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't: and ladies, too, they will not let me have all fool to myself; they'll be snatching."

He continues to jest and sing in mingled sadness and merriment, when Lear asks:

"When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?"

The fool replies, alluding more and more to the king's degraded position:

"I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mothers; for when thou gavest them the rod,"

and then sings though certainly not cheerfully:

"Then they for sudden joy did weep,
And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep,
And go the fools among."

He then sadly adds:

"I had rather be any kind o' thing than a fool; and yet I would not be thee, nuncle; thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides, and left nothing i' the middle: here comes one o' the parings."

Goneril enters, and her changed look from docility to something like defiance, Lear at once tries to reprove, apparently for the first time, as he asks:

"How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet on?
Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown."

Here the fool cannot help exclaiming, protected as he thinks by Lear's presence:

"Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning; now thou art an O without a figure. I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing."

Then addressing Goneril:

"Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face bids me, though you say nothing. Mum, mum."

Then Goneril appears in her true colours, conscious of her powers, though fortunately not agreed with her noble husband, Albany, she sternly confronts her helpless father and says:

"Not only, sir, this your all-licensed fool,
But other of your insolent retinue
Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth
In rank and not-to-be-endured riots. Sir,
I had thought, by making this well known unto you,
To have found a safe redress; but now grow fearful,
By what yourself too late have spoke and done,
That you protect this course, and put it on
By your allowance."

The fool again exclaims to Lear:

"For you know nuncle,
The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had its head bit off by its young."

Lear is so utterly amazed at finding what seems to him a totally different character in one whom he had known, or thought he had known, all her life, makes no immediate answer. He is evidently a complete stranger to the real woman, and can only ask in utter amazement, as if half stupefied, the short simple question:

"Are you our daughter?"

Goneril scornfully replies:

"I would you would make use of your good wisdom,
Whereof I know you are fraught; and put away
These dispositions which of late transport you
From what you rightly are."

Lear still astonished, fancies he is in a dream, or has lost his wits, hardly realising that the person he now sees and hears can be the real Goneril. He himself asks in vague bewilderment:

"Does any here know me? This is not Lear:
Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?
Either his notion weakens, his discernings
Are lethargied. Ha! 'tis not so.
Who is it that can tell me who I am?"

While in this mental confusion the fool replies with some truth:

"Lear's shadow."

The old king quite bewildered wonders at all around him as if in a dream, and asks Goneril whom he hardly recognises in her new character of open defiance:

"Your name, fair gentlewoman?"

Goneril utterly hardened, shameless, and well knowing her own sudden independence of her father's authority, insolently replies:

"This admiration, sir, is much o' the favour
Of other your new pranks. . . .
. . . . . .
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd, and bold,
That this court, infected with their manners,
Shows like a riotous inn. . . .
. . . . . .

The shame itself doth speak
For instant remedy ; be then desired
By her, that else will take the thing she begs,
A little to disquantity your train ;
And the remainder, that shall still depend,
To be such men as may besort your age,
Which know themselves and you."

Her father is at last roused to the true state of his position. Goneril's threat of taking what she requires if not granted, now excites the passionate old man, hitherto treated with such implicit obedience, to sudden fury, and he exclaims:

"Darkness and devils !
Saddle my horses ; call my train together.
Degenerate bastard ! I'll not trouble thee :
Yet have I left a daughter."

He then clings to the hope that Regan will behave differently from Goneril, when Albany enters. This noble-minded prince has evidently been completely mistaken in the true character of his wife, Goneril, and is never in her confidence. Lear now recalling the past more and more, exclaims:

"Woe, that too late repents."

Then sternly addressing Albany:

"O ! sir, are you come ?
Is it your will ? Speak, sir."

Albany is silent and Lear says to his attendants:

"Prepare my horses,"

and again reflecting on his present state exclaims with a vehemence which probably was never forgotten by all who heard him:

"Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous, when thou showest thee in a child,
Than the sea monster."

Albany amazed at this scene, vainly tries to soothe his father-in-law, exclaiming:

"Pray sir, be patient,"

when Lear remembering some of Goneril's words, contradicts her in impatient fury:

> "Detested kite! thou liest:
> My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
> That all particulars of duty know,
> And in the most exact regard support
> The worships of their name."

Then in the midst of unavailing rage, the sweet image of Cordelia flashes across his distracted mind as he recalls Goneril's former mischief-making against her innocent sister:

> "... O most small fault,
> How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
> Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature
> From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love,
> And added to the gall."

Then in bitter self-reproach at recalling his past conduct, he addresses himself, striking his head:

> "O Lear, Lear, Lear!
> Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in
> And thy dear judgment out! Go, go, my people."

He is perhaps hastening away, when the noble Albany protests, astonished:

> "My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant
> Of what hath moved you."

Even at this excited moment Lear is apparently impressed by Albany's truth and sincerity as he replies, as if exonerating him:

> "It may be so, my lord,"

and then denounces his ungrateful daughter before the heathen deities whom Shakespeare apparently represents as worshipped at this period in England. Lear exclaims in the bitterness of almost frantic wrath:

> "Hear, Nature, hear! dear goddess, hear!
> Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
> To make this creature fruitful. ...
> . . . . . .
> And from her derogate body never spring
> A babe to honour her! If she must teem,
> Create her child of spleen, that it may live
> And be a thwart disnatured torment to her!
> Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
> With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,

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Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
To laughter and contempt, that she may feel
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child! Away, away."

He departs, and Albany, shocked and astounded, asks his wife:

"Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?"

Goneril utterly unmoved by her father's terrible malediction, and well knowing she and Regan share at present all his former power, calmly answers her husband scornfully, alluding to Lear:

"Never afflict yourself to know the cause;
But let his disposition have that scope
That dotage gives it."

Lear re-enters, again raging at Goneril, and flattering himself that Regan, to whom he is now going, will take his part against her. He then departs, with these words:

"Thou shalt find
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
I have cast off for ever; thou shalt, I warrant thee."

Goneril, as if wishing to rouse Albany against Lear, draws his attention to Lear's last words, saying:

"Do you mark that, my lord?"

but Albany puzzled apparently, as if beginning to distrust Goneril, though still under her influence, says doubtfully:

"I cannot be so partial, Goneril,
To the great love I bear you"——

when she contemptuously interrupts him:

"Pray you, content."

Then she calls Oswald, and finding the poor jester, angrily exclaims:

"You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master,"

and the poor lad goes out calling after the departing old king:

"Nuncle Lear, Nuncle Lear! tarry, and take the fool with thee."

Goneril then alone with Albany complains of Lear

keeping a hundred knights in their palace, saying sarcastically:

> "'Tis politic and safe to let him keep
> At point a hundred knights; yes, that on every dream,
> Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,
> He may enguard his dotage with their powers."

Albany, evidently not agreeing with her, yet doubtful how to act, replies:

> "Well, you may fear too far,"

and she sharply replies:

> "Safer than trust too far.
> . . . . . .
> I know his heart.
> What he hath utter'd I have writ my sister."

She then calls her trusty steward, Oswald, asking him if he has written a letter to her sister, Regan, by her desire; this man who seems also her secretary, replies he has, and she charges him:

> "Take you some company, and away to horse:
> Inform her full of my particular fear; . . .
> . . . . . .
> Get you gone.
> And hasten your return." [*Exit Oswald.*

Then Goneril tries to harden Albany against her father:

> "No, no, my lord,
> This milky gentleness and course of yours
> Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,
> You are much more attask'd for want of wisdom
> Than praised for harmful mildness."

Albany, doubtful about her conduct but not yet aware of what she is capable, replies:

> "How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell:
> Striving to better, oft we mar what's well,"

but he still partially trusts her, and they go out.

The next scene introduces Lear, Kent, and the fool in a court before Goneril's palace, about to start on their

journey. Lear, still in his senses though confused, says to Kent, whom disguised he never recognises:

"Go you before to Gloster with these letters. . . . If your diligence be not speedy I shall be there afore you,"

and Kent departs on his mission. Lear and his jester indulge in a strange talk together, in which the fool's shrewdness occasionally appears amid his fantastic way of speaking. Thus he addresses Lear ironically:

"Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly; for though she's as like this as a crab's like an apple, yet I can tell what I can tell."

Lear asks:

"What canst tell, boy?"

and he answers:

"She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab;"

while Lear confused, and becoming weak, exclaims:

"I will forget my nature,"

and recalling his gifts to Goneril and Regan utters in disjointed sentences:

"So kind a father—to take 't again perforce! Monster ingratitude!"

The fool makes the curious remark:

"Thou shouldst not have been old, before thou hadst been wise."

The idea of real insanity now strikes Lear for the first time, as coming events cast their shadows before, and he exclaims almost wildly:

"Oh! let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven;
Keep me in temper; I would not be mad,"

when an attendant announces his horses are ready, and Lear sets out for Gloster's castle.

The next act and scene introduce Edmund in his father Gloster's abode meeting a courtier named Curan, who tells him that Regan and her husband Cornwall will arrive at Gloster's castle this night, and also reports that Albany and

Cornwall are now at variance. Curan departs, and Edmund, prompt, resolute, and treacherous, exclaims:

"The duke be here to-night? The better! best!
This weaves itself perforce into my business.
My father hath set guard to take my brother."

He then calls his unsuspicious brother Edgar, and exclaims:

"My father watches: Oh, sir! fly this place;
Intelligence is given where you are hid;
You have now the good advantage of the night.
Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?"

Edgar does not reply, but apparently he has as Edmund proceeds:—

"He's coming hither, now, i' the night, i' the haste,
And Regan with him; have you nothing said
Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany?"
Edgar. "I am sure on't, not a word."
Edmund. "I hear my father coming; pardon me;
In cunning I must draw my sword upon you.
Draw; seem to defend yourself; now quit you well.
Yield; come before my father. Light, ho! here!
Fly, brother. Torches! torches! So, farewell."

After this imaginary encounter, or fencing match, Edgar departs, completely believing his deceitful brother, and Edmund then slightly wounds himself, intending to accuse Edgar of attacking him. Gloster appears, and Edmund, showing his wound, says, piteously:

"Look, sir, I bleed."

He then invents a story against Edgar, and convinces Gloster that he is a murderer in heart. Gloster exclaims:

"Let him fly far:
Not in this land shall he remain uncaught."

Edmund declares that he vainly tried to reason with Edgar about his duty to their father, and was wounded by his brother in consequence. Gloster, quite trusting Edmund, exclaims in mingled anger and alarm:

"Strong and fasten'd villain! . . .
All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape;
. . . Besides, his picture
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom
May have due note of him";

and then says to Edmund what probably amused and gratified his base spirit:

> "And of my land,
> Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means
> To make thee capable."

Regan and Cornwall now enter with attendants, pretending to sympathise with Gloster about the alleged undutifulness of Edgar. Regan asks if Edgar was one of her father's knights, and Edmund replies that he was. Cornwall and Regan then highly praise Edmund for his supposed good conduct to his father, while Edgar is being pursued, but fortunately not captured. Gloster, therefore, is now, though for a very short time, altogether deceived about the real character of his two sons, and also quite mistaken in the designs of Regan and Cornwall. The latter says to Gloster, who is a complete dupe among them:

> "If he be taken, he shall never more
> Be fear'd of doing harm; make your own purpose,
> How in my strength you please. For you, Edmund,
> Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant
> So much commend itself, you shall be ours:
> Natures of such deep trust we shall much need:
> You we first seize on."

Edmund replies with courteous humility:

> "I shall serve you, sir, truly";

and the deceived Gloster humbly says to the Duke:

> "For him I thank your grace."

Regan then explains the reason for their sudden visit to Gloster's castle:

> "Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night;
> Occasions, noble Gloster, of some poise,
> Wherein we must have use of your advice.
> Our father, he hath writ, so hath our sister,
> Of differences, which I best thought it fit
> To answer from our home; the several messengers
> From hence attend despatch. Our good old friend,
> Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow
> Your needful counsel to our business,
> Which craves the instant use."

Gloster, little knowing those he addresses, loyally answers:

"I serve you, madam.
Your graces are right welcome."

The next scene introduces Kent still disguised, meeting Goneril's steward, Oswald, at Gloster's castle, whither he is sent by his mistress. Kent, who thoroughly understands this worthless fellow, soon quarrels with him, when Regan, Cornwall, and Edmund enter. They take Oswald's part, and order Kent to be put in the stocks. This strange old English punishment, well known in Shakespeare's time, seems out of place here, and Kent vainly remonstrates, declaring he is Lear's servant, though without revealing his name. He exclaims:

"Call not your stocks for me: I serve the King,
On whose employment I was sent to you";

but he is unheeded—the old King's name being no longer respected by either of his daughters or Cornwall. The latter, evidently a ferocious man, is yet, if anything, less vindictive than his wife, and exclaims:

"Fetch forth the stocks!
There shall he sit till noon";

when the relentless Regan exclaims:

"Till noon! till night, my lord; and all night too."

Kent nobly protests:

"Why, madam, if I were your father's dog,
You should not use me so."

To this touching remonstrance, Regan, as hardened and shameless as her sister, only replies:

"Sir, being his knave, I will."

Gloster now vainly protests against Kent's ill-treatment; Cornwall and Regan insist on his being put in the stocks and then go out, leaving Gloster and Kent together. The former tries to comfort Kent whom he never recognises, but is now quite helpless, though in his own castle, and has to leave Kent alone, who proceeds, while in the stocks, to read a letter from Cordelia in France, whom likely he has informed of the terrible events that

have happened in England since she left it. After reading this letter without naming its contents, he sleeps, and the next very short scene introduces the poor belied Edgar hiding from pursuit in a wood. He, like Kent, has disguised himself, feigning idiotcy and calling himself "Poor Turlygood, poor Tom." He only appears now to reveal his plans for self-protection during his present danger, exclaiming:

"I heard myself proclaim'd;
And by the happy hollow of a tree
Escap'd the hunt. No port is free; no place,
That guard, and most unusual vigilance,
Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape,
I will preserve myself; and am bethought
To take the basest and most poorest shape
That ever penury, in contempt of man,
Brought near to beast."

He departs, resolving to act the part of a poor beggarly idiot, or object of charity, and in the next scene Lear, with his fool and an attendant appear before Gloster's castle, and find Kent in the stocks. Kent assures him that Cornwall and Regan have placed him in them, which Lear at first cannot believe. At length the unfortunate King excited, amazed, and thoroughly bewildered by new experiences exclaims, full of agitation:

"O! how this mother swells up towards my heart; *Hysterica passio!* down, thou climbing sorrow!"

then rousing himself asks:

"Where is this daughter?"

He hears she is in the castle and goes apparently to its door or hall, while the fool and Kent remain together. The former tries to talk in his usual fanciful way, but the poor lad cannot be really merry, and Lear now attended by Gloster returns. Lear utterly confounded by late events and his altered position, still clings to the hope that Regan may be dutiful, and exclaims as if trying to make excuses for her and Cornwall:

"Deny to speak with me! They are sick!
They are weary!
They have travell'd all the night!"

He thus tries to excuse them, but the truth flashing on his mind, exclaims:

> "Mere fetches,
> The images of revolt and flying off.
> Fetch me a better answer."

His faithful subject, Gloster, knowing the bitter truth, which Lear is apparently only now learning, replies:

> "My dear lord,
> You know the fiery quality of the duke;
> How unremovable and fix'd he is
> In his own course."

This account of his son-in-law hitherto an obedient subject, now transformed into an insolent, independent prince, drives the astonished Lear almost to distraction. Remembering the past and astounded by the present state of things, he exclaims in vague fury:

> "Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!
> Fiery! what quality? Why, Gloster, Gloster,
> I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife."

Gloster uneasily replies:

> "Well, my good lord, I have informed them so."

Lear, unable to realise his present degradation, is confounded by Gloster's words, repeating:

> "*Inform'd them!* Dost thou understand me, man?"

Then recalling his former power, dignity, and almost absolute authority, he proceeds proudly:

> "The King would speak with Cornwall; the dear father
> Would with his daughter speak, commands her service:
> Are they inform'd of this?
> My breath and blood!"

Again he repeats Gloster's description of Cornwall once Lear's humble subject:

> "Fiery! the fiery duke! Tell the hot duke that ——"

He pauses in his indignant surprise and tries to imagine excuses for his daughter and son-in-law:

> "No, but not yet; may be he is not well;
> Infirmity doth still neglect all office
> Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves
> When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind

To suffer with the body. I'll forbear ;
And am fall'n out with my more headier will,
To take the indisposed and sickly fit,
For the sound man."

Lear thus tries to think that Cornwall's sudden rudeness or disrespect is caused by illness, then, as if recollecting himself, and seeing Kent in the stocks, exclaims passionately :

"Death on my state ! Wherefore
Should he sit here ? This act persuades me
That this remotion of the Duke and her
Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.
Go, tell the Duke and 's wife I'd speak with them,
Now, presently ; bid them come forth and hear me,
Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum
Till it cry sleep to death."

Gloster knowing only too well the helpless state of the self-deposed King, as well as Cornwall's haughtiness and complete independence, nervously replies :

"I would have all well betwixt you,"

and departs to give Lear's message. The latter exclaims before Kent and the fool :

"O me ! my heart, my rising heart ! but down !"

The poor fool, knowing Lear's distress, and partly sharing it, exclaims with a feeble attempt at cheerfulness :

"Cry to it, nuncle, as the Cockney did to the eels when she put 'em i' the paste alive,"

but his nonsense can no longer enliven or cheer the confused and bewildered King.

Regan and Cornwall now enter with Gloster. Regan coldly tells her father she is glad to see him, and Lear replies, remembering his past indulgence :

"Regan, I think you are ; I know what reason
I have to think so : if thou shouldst not be glad,
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb."

This is the only allusion in the play to the former Queen, and which of her daughters she most resembled is never told.

Lear then seeing Kent freed from the stocks, says:

"O! are you free?
Some other time for that,"

and proceeds to complain of Goneril to Regan, never thinking they are in league against him:

"Beloved Regan,
Thy sister's naught: O Regan! she hath tied
Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here
[*Points to his heart*],
I can scarce speak to thee";

Regan contemptuously replies:

"I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope
You less know how to value her desert
Than she to scant her duty.
. . . . . .
If, sir, perchance
She have restrain'd the riots of your followers,
'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,
As clears her from all blame."

Lear, irritated and confounded, utters an imprecation on Goneril, and Regan proceeds with the same insolent contempt:

"O, sir! you are old;
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine; you should be ruled and led
By some discretion that discerns your state
Better than you yourself. Therefore I pray you
That to our sister you do make return;
Say you have wrong'd her, sir."

Lear enraged, yet still unable to believe Regan is like Goneril, attempts a remonstrance, doubtfully hoping it will have due effect:

"Ask her forgiveness?
Do you but mark how this becomes the house."

He kneels in assumed supplication, thinking such a sight will move or shame Regan, and perhaps for the first time in his life tries to act a humble part, exclaiming:

"Dear daughter; I confess that I am old;
Age is unnecessary: on my knees I beg
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food."

Regan, utterly unmoved, scornfully retorts:

"Good sir, no more; these are unsightly tricks.
Return you to my sister."

Lear rising, with a touch of his old spirit replies:

"Never, Regan.
She hath abated me of half my train;
Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue,"

then relapsing into impotent fury he exclaims:

"All the stored vengeances of heaven fall
On her ungrateful top!"

He continues to denounce her when Cornwall, now feeling himself independent for the first time in his life, ventures to reprove his former king:

"Fie, sir, fie!"

Lear, lashed into yet greater fury by a rebuke from his son-in-law, continues in frantic rage:

"You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames
Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty
You fen-sucked fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,
To fall and blast her pride!"

Regan, scornfully ridiculing her old father's violent temper, insolently exclaims:

"O the blest gods! so will you wish on me,
When the rash mood is on."

Lear, still trying to deceive himself in the idea that Regan has a better heart than Goneril, despite her present manner, exclaims with appealing tenderness:

"No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse";

and reminds her that he has left half the kingdom to her, and thinks that she cannot have forgotten all his past favours to her. To this remonstrance Regan makes a practical answer:

"Good sir, to the purpose,"

and Lear, still mindful of his dignity, asks who put his servant in the stocks, and adds:

"Regan, I have good hope
Thou didst not know on 't."

No answer is made him, but Goneril now appears, her approach first announced by her steward, Oswald, and at sight of her Lear exclaims in wild appeal to higher powers:

"O heavens,
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old,
Make it your cause; send down and take my part!"

then addressing Goneril:

"Art not ashamed to look upon this beard?"

No answer is returned, and he exclaims to Regan, whom he now sees is quite agreed with her sister:

"O Regan! wilt thou take her by the hand?"

Goneril, if anything the sterner of the two sisters, haughtily asks:

"Why not by the hand, sir? How have I offended?
All's not offence that indiscretion finds
And dotage terms so."

Lear almost overcome among so many foes, once apparently obedient and loyal, exclaims as if struggling with bodily weakness:

"O sides! you are too tough;
Will you yet hold?"

Then again recollecting the ill-usage of his servant, as if among the first insults to himself, asks:

"How came my man i' the stocks?"

Cornwall insolently replies:

"I set him there, sir; but his own disorders
Deserved much less advancement."

Lear furious yet astounded at Cornwall's complete change from former loyalty to impudent defiance, can only ask in utter, almost incredulous, amazement:

"You! did you?"

Regan then calmly addresses the helpless, insulted King:

"I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.
If, till the expiration of your month,
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
Dismissing half your train, come then to me."

Lear absolutely refuses to return to Goneril, and still trying to think Regan is better than her sister, finally exclaims to Regan, alluding to Goneril:

"Return with her!
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter
To this detested groom."
[*Pointing to Oswald.*

Goneril coldly replies in a sardonic style that exasperates Lear beyond his reason:

"At your choice, sir,"

and Lear exclaims, nearly distracted:

"I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell.
We 'll no more meet, no more see one another.
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it;
. . . . . .
Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure:
I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,
I and my hundred knights."

Hitherto Regan has not absolutely refused to fulfil her obligation, but now thinks it time to do so decisively:

"Not altogether so;
I looked not for you yet, nor am provided
For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister."

Lear now for the first time sees that his daughters are like one in conduct and sentiment, and vaguely asks Regan, as if still surprised:

"Is this well spoken?"

His weakness becoming more and more apparent, induces Goneril and Regan to question his right to have more than fifty followers, which was Goneril's first allowance to him, and Regan says she will only permit half that

number to attend Lear in her palace. Lear vainly reminds them of his condition with them when abdicating in their favour, and asks Regan:

> "What! must I come to you
> With five-and-twenty? Regan, said you so?"

and she replies:

> "And speak't again, my lord; no more with me."

Then Lear exclaims, as it were looking from one to another of his relentless daughters before him:

> "Those wicked creatures yet do look well favour'd
> When others are more wicked; not being the worst
> Stands in some rank of praise."

Then addressing Goneril:

> "I'll go with thee;
> Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,
> And thou art twice her love."

Goneril knowing her power, and more convinced perhaps than ever of being quite agreed with Regan, asks Lear what need has he of even five followers, when her own can serve him, and Regan finally asks:

> "What need one?"

At these declarations their ruined father's mind as well as temper gives way completely. He can well foresee his probable treatment by the servants of Goneril and Regan when left undefended among them, and utterly distracted breaks forth into wild reproaches, first appealing to the gods:

> "You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
> As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
> If it be you that stirs these daughters' hearts
> Against their father, fool me not so much
> To bear it tamely, touch me with noble anger;
> . . . . . .
> No, you unnatural hags,
> I will have such revenges on you both
> That all the world shall—I will do such things."

Then confused in his torrent of impotent fury he adds:

"What they are yet I know not, but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep;
No, I'll not weep:
I have full cause of weeping, but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
Or ere I'll weep."

Hitherto his naturally high spirit has sustained Lear in this final and terrible denunciation of both daughters, who remain utterly unmoved before him, but his age, bodily weakness, and mental excitement become too much for him, and he exclaims to his jester in a sort of vague terror:

"O fool! I shall go mad,"

and departs with Kent, Gloster, and the jester.

A storm is heard, and Gloster, the helpless host and soon the victim of his savage visitors, re-enters saying:

"The King is in high rage.
He calls to horse; but will I know not whither."

The relentless Goneril exclaims:

"My lord, entreat him by no means to stay,"

and Gloster, quite helpless, though in his own house, can only exclaim:

"Alack! the night comes on, and the high winds
Do sorely ruffle; for many miles about
There's scarce a bush."

Regan, as unmoved as ever, and apparently hoping her father may perish in the storm, replies:

"O! sir, to wilful men,
The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors;
He is attended with a desperate train."

Cornwall, quite agreed with his wife and her sister, advises, or rather orders Gloster:

"Shut up your doors, my lord; 'tis a wild night;
My Regan counsels well."

Thus ends the second Act.

The third is on a heath where Kent meets a gentleman whose name is not given, and who has his confidence

though he does not recognise Kent in his continued disguise. They meet on a stormy night, and the gentleman tells Kent that Lear, with the fool

> "Who labours to out-jest
> His heart-struck injuries,"

is now near them and exposed to the storm. Kent tells him that Albany and Cornwall have quarrelled, and then entrusts him with a message to France, expecting that from thence will come an invasion for Lear's rescue. Kent adds impressively:

> "Make your speed to Dover, you shall find
> Some that will thank you, making just report
> Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow
> The King hath cause to plain.
> . . . . . .
> If you shall see Cordelia,
> As fear not but you shall, show her this ring.
> . . . . . .
> Fie on this storm!
> I will go seek the King."

They part, and in the next scene Lear appears with the jester on the heath during a terrible storm, which coming amid all his troubles, makes the old king nearly as mad as his follower. He almost raves, his disordered mind continually reverting to his ungrateful daughters, while the poor fool, longing to have shelter at any price, exclaims:

"Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughter's blessing; here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools."

But Lear exclaims in distracted desperation:

> "Rumble thy bellyful! spit fire! spout, rain!
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
> I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
> I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
> You owe me no subscription: then let fall
> Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.
> But yet I call you servile ministers,
> That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
> Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
> So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul."

Lear continues lamenting while the fool utters strange

pieces of poetry, being always faithful yet practically useless to his old master.

Kent now appears, exclaiming:

"Alas! sir, are you here? things that love night
Love not such nights as these;
. . . . . .
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard; man's nature cannot carry
The affliction nor the fear."

Lear, in vague superstition, his mind becoming more and more deranged, exclaims solemnly, evidently alluding to the heathen deities as before:

"Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice;
. . . . . .
Close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace."

Then recalling his own present state and past history, he adds:

"I am a man
More sinned against than sinning."

Kent says there is a hovel near and offers to lead him to it.

Lear, as if observing the poor fool shivering, exclaims:

"My wits begin to turn.
Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?
I am cold myself."

Then to Kent, he says:

"Where is this straw, my fellow?"

and observes as if to himself:

"The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious,
Come, your hovel.
Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee."

The poor fool endeavours to sing, probably meaning to cheer Lear and himself, the rather doleful lines:

"He that has and a little tiny wit,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
Must make content with his fortune fit
Though the rain it raineth every day."

Lear probably glad to hear his voice replies:

"True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this hovel.

The jester though in every way out of his element in such a scene of exposure and hardship bears up bravely, singing snatches of song in which flashes of common-sense are strangely mixed with wild fancies. He exclaims:

"I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:
When priests are more in word than matter;
When brewers mar their malt with water;
. . . . . .
When every case in law is right;
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues;
Nor cut-purses come not to throngs.
. . . . . .
Then shall the realm of Albion
Come to great confusion."

He then makes brief allusion to ancient English legends:

"This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his time."

The next scene in Gloster's Castle though short is very important. Gloster is with Edmund, and knowing nothing of the latter's treachery completely trusts him, and with fatal results. Gloster has discovered and deplores the conduct of Regan, Goneril, and Cornwall to the hapless king, while Edmund deceitfully pretends to blame it also, to preserve his father's confidence. Gloster exclaims:

"Alack, alack! Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house; charged me, on pain of their perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him."

Edmund with his usual duplicity replies:

"Most savage and unnatural,"

and his father thoroughly trusting him, now tells him all he knows:

"Go to; say you nothing. There is division between the dukes, and a worse matter than that. I have received a letter this night; 'tis dangerous to be spoken; I have locked the letter in my closet. These injuries the king now bears will be revenged home; there's part of a power already footed; we must incline to the king. I will seek him and privily relieve him; go you and maintain talk with the duke. . . . If I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the king, my old master, must be relieved."

He goes out and Edmund when alone, reveals his treachery:

"This courtesy, forbid thee, shall the duke
Instantly know; and of that letter too:
This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me
That which my father loses; no less than all;"

then contemplating his father's coming ruin or death, the wicked son, well suited to the two wicked daughters, exultingly concludes:

"The younger rises, when the old doth fall."

The next scene shows Lear with Kent and the fool outside the hovel during the storm. Kent entreats the half mad king to enter, when the latter, as though confused, replies:

"Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fix'd,
The lesser is scarce felt.
. . . . . .
. . . When the mind's free
The body's delicate; the tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!
. . . . . .
. . . O Regan, Goneril!
Your kind old father, whose frank heart gave all,—
O! that way madness lies; let me shun that;
No more of that."

The idea of madness again strikes Lear with a peculiar terror when Kent again entreating him to enter the hovel, Lear sends the fool in first, whom he evidently pities before himself, saying:

("In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty.")

The fool goes in, but rushes out, finding Edgar there disguised and pretending madness. The latter comes out, but Lear does not recognise him. The ensuing talk among this singular group shows the wonderful contrast between a half-witted youth like the jester, an old man astray in mind through grief like Lear, and a pretended madman like Edgar, who observes keenly all around him, while pretending madness and fear to save his threatened life. Amid this strange trio Kent though also disguised for the same reason yet attending steadfastly to the king, seems at his noblest advantage. Lear now absorbed by his own griefs, fancies that Edgar's wretched appearance and strange talk denote similar treatment to his own from undutiful children, and impressed with this idea, exclaims in wondering inquiry:

> "Didst thou give all to thy two daughters?
> And art thou come to this?"

Edgar acting his part exclaims like a crazy beggar:

> "Who gives anything to poor Tom? whom the foul fiend
> Hath led through fire and through flame. . . .
> . . . . . .
> Bless thy five wits! Tom's a cold. . . .
> . . . . . .
> Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes."

Lear wondering at him exclaims:

> "Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air
> Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters."

Kent observes as Edgar makes no reply:

> "He hath no daughters, sir";

but Lear, his brain dwelling on his own misery, vehemently replies:

> "Death, traitor! nothing could have subdu'd nature
> To such a lowness but his unkind daughters."

The poor fool exclaims naturally:

> "This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen."

Edgar still calling himself "Poor Tom" continues to talk in a wild, vague manner, and Lear becomes more and

more distracted in mind and thought, when Gloster appears with a torch without recognising his disguised son, who, acting his part, calls himself in answer to Gloster asking him his name:

"Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt, and the water; who is whipped from tything to tything, and stocked, punished, and imprisoned";

and then either sings or recites from memory:

"But mice and rats and such small deer
Have been Tom's food for seven long year."

Gloster, shocked and surprised at finding Lear with such a companion, exclaims:

"What! hath your grace no better company?
. . . . . .
Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands."

Lear becomes more and more confused while Gloster never recognises either Kent or Edgar in their disguises, and exclaims:

"His daughters seek his death. Ah! that good Kent;
He said it would be thus, poor banish'd man!
I'll tell thee, friend,
I am almost mad myself. I had a son,
Now outlaw'd from my blood; he sought my life,
The grief hath crazed my wits."

This extraordinary party, Lear, Edgar, Kent, Gloster, and the fool, are all now hiding from danger, and they alike take refuge in the hovel. Lear mad with grief, the fool naturally weak-minded, though not idiotic, while Kent, Edgar, and Gloster, all faithful to Lear, are able to preserve his life, but as yet are unable to comfort him.

The next scene is in Gloster's castle where the savage Cornwall and the treacherous Edmund are together. The former himself exclaims, referring to Gloster:

"I will have my revenge ere I depart his house."

Edmund, who has thus succeeded in irritating Cornwall against Gloster, deceitfully exclaims:

"How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just. This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France."

Then persevering in his resolve to ruin his father, the accomplished hypocrite adds:

"O heavens! that this treason were not, or not I the detector!

. . . . . .

If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand."

The stern duke rejoins, doubtless to Edmund's gratification:

"True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloster; seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension."

Edmund, the incarnation of base cunning, says aside:

"If I find him comforting the king, it will stuff his suspicion more fully."

Then to the duke he says with assumed regret:

"I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood."

Cornwall, fully accepting his services, replies:

"I will lay trust upon thee; and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love."

The next scene is in a farmhouse adjoining Gloster's castle, where Lear, Kent, the jester, and Edgar, have found a refuge provided for them by Gloster, who is now as much hated and endangered by Cornwall and Regan, as any of the others, though the lord of the soil. Gloster having settled his singular group of helpless guests in this place, departs to wait on Regan and Cornwall in his castle. When he is gone the strange talk is resumed between the poor crazy king, the half-witted jester, and the pretended madman, Edgar. In contrasting these various forms of mental distraction, real and assumed, of these three, Shakespeare apparently finds a peculiar interest, yet the representation however truthful must be repulsive, if not puzzling to many readers. Edgar's assumed insanity is shown in uttering wild nonsense, mingled with complaints of bodily pain or hardship; the jester faintly tries to be merry and repeat verses, while Lear's disordered mind is perpetually referring to his two

undutiful daughters, who he fancies are on their trial before him. He exclaims:

"I will arraign them straight."
(*To Edgar*) "Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer,"
(*To the fool*) "Thou, sapient sir, sit here."

Then as if addressing Goneril and Regan:

"Now, you she foxes."

He stops, and Edgar watching him, exclaims:

"Look where he stands and glares."

Kent always devoted to his hapless master asks him:

"How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed:
Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?"

Lear now quite out of his senses replies:

"I'll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence,"

and addressing Edgar, the fool, and Kent, severally, says:

"Thou robed man of justice, take thy place;
And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity,
Bench by his side. You are o' the commission,
Sit you too."

Edgar, as if arguing with Lear, trying to soothe him says:

"Let us deal justly."

The distracted king, partly believing that the trial of his daughters is really proceeding, continues:

"Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this honourable assembly, she kicked the poor king her father."

This accusation was likely mere fancy, no mention was made of either Goneril or Regan actually striking Lear. The fool as if acting a part to please Lear exclaims:

"Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?"

Lear exclaims, still fancying he sees his daughters before him, and that one escapes:

"She cannot deny it.
And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim
What store her heart is made on. Stop her there!
Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place!
False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?"

To this question Edgar can only reply:

"Bless thy five wits."

Kent in this trying scene preserves his good sense, and begs Lear to have patience, while Edgar exclaims aside:

"My tears begin to take his part so much,
They 'll mar my counterfeiting."

Lear, with a vague idea of being deserted or treated ungratefully on every side, wildly exclaims, apparently remembering his former pets:

"The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me."

He becomes more and more confused or fanciful, and wildly exclaims with the image of Regan, his final disappointment, in his mind:

"Then let them anatomize Regan, see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?"

yet Lear in pronouncing threats of banishment and death against the faithful Kent had shown himself also very relentless. It is possible he would not have carried them out, but evidently his passionate nature had been well studied by his artful daughters, Goneril and Regan.

During his days of power Lear is represented as almost a despotic king, vehement and imperious, though the deep attachment of such "good and true" subjects as Kent and Gloster indicates that the king had been a generous, kind master, but was sinking gradually into something like dotage when the play begins. In his adversity, these noblemen show certainly more love for Lear than the latter seems to deserve, from his conduct in the tragedy. In his present distraction neither Edgar himself, in great danger from his deceived father, nor Kent, disguised and supposed to be banished, can render Lear much assistance, but being thoroughly faithful, brave and honest, they bide their time. At length Kent persuades Lear, who is likely quite exhausted, to take rest, and the king exclaims in a confused way:

"Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains: so, so, so. We 'll go to supper i' the morning: so, so, so,"

while the fool, in a last poor attempt to be witty or cheerful, rejoins:

"And I 'll go to bed at noon."

Gloster re-enters, revealing to Kent a plot against Lear's life, planned apparently by his wicked guests, Regan and Cornwall. Though Gloster never recognises Kent in disguise, he believes him faithful, and persuades him to convey the old king to Dover. Kent agrees, and takes the jester also, who does not again appear in the play. Gloster, Kent and the fool then depart, bearing Lear off with them, leaving Edgar who, when alone, nobly compares his comparatively slight sorrows with the afflictions of the unhappy king.

"When we our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
. . . . . .
How light and portable my pain seems now,
When that which makes me bend makes the king bow;
He childed as I fathered!"

He thus compares Lear ill-treated by his children to himself ill-treated by his father, Gloster. He departs, well knowing the plots that are around him, but finally awaiting the time to throw off his disguise and re-appear the avenger of his father's wrongs and his own.

The next scene is one of peculiar atrocity, painful to read or remember, yet essential to the progress of this awful tragedy. The four chief villains of the play, male and female, Cornwall, Edmund, Goneril, and Regan, are now in the unhappy Gloster's castle, which they seize upon, Edmund having revealed his father's plans and hopes to aid Lear to the others, and they are resolved to destroy him and put Edmund in Gloster's place. Cornwall, a savage specimen of a feudal tyrant, says to his servants:

"Seek out the traitor, Gloster,"

and Regan exclaims:

"Hang him instantly."

Then to Edmund, Cornwall says:

"Keep you our sister company,"

meaning Goneril, who is about to return to her husband under Edmund's escort, and adds with cold-blooded ceremony:

"The revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Advise the duke, where you are going, to a most festinate preparation: we are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister; farewell, my Lord of Gloster,"

so he now terms Edmund.

Gloster is arrested in his own castle by his powerful guests, Regan and Cornwall, alike enraged at discovering that their host is faithful to Lear. They bind his arms, when he exclaims:

"What mean your graces? Good, my friends, consider you are my guests: do me no foul play, friends."

Corn. "Bind him, I say."

Regan adds:

"Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!"

and she plucks his beard, which insult Gloster resents, but is helpless, and Cornwall and Regan then savagely ask what letters he has had from France, and to whom he has sent "the lunatic king," as Regan terms him, and Cornwall then asks:

"Where hast thou sent the king?"

Gloster replies:

"To Dover."

Both then ask, why to Dover, and Gloster, exasperated, at last exclaims in desperation that he would not see his old master ill-used, and has therefore connived at his escape.

Cornwall, in a fury, stamps out his eyes, when a horrified servant has the unexpected boldness to interfere in Gloster's defence, and mortally wounds Cornwall, but is himself stabbed to death by Regan.

Gloster, in despair, exclaims:

"Where's my son, Edmund?
Edmund enkindle all the sparks of nature
To quit this horrid act."

Regan then reveals what the misled Gloster never suspected:

"Thou call'st on him that hates thee; it was he
That made the overture of thy treasons to us,
Who is too good to pity thee."

Gloster, astonished as much as Lear, and equally deceived in his children's real characters, exclaims in remorse:

"O my follies! Then Edgar was abused.
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!"

Regan then orders Gloster to be turned, when blind, out of the house, and Cornwall, owning himself seriously wounded, is led away by Regan, and never appears again.

The next act and scene are on a heath where Edgar meets his unfortunate father, led by an old man, who says to the helpless Gloster:

"O my good lord!
I have been your tenant, and your father's tenant,
These fourscore years."

Gloster kindly replies:

"Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone:
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;
Thee they may hurt."

He then recalls his own errors and sorrows, exclaiming:

"Ah! dear son, Edgar,
. . . . . .
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again."

The old man leading Gloster takes Edgar for some well-known brainless idiot, calling him "poor mad Tom." Gloster seems to know the name, asking his guide to leave him with the supposed idiot and follow on the Dover road with clothes for Tom, saying:

"Thou wilt o'ertake us, hence a mile or twain
I' the way towards Dover, do it for ancient love;
And bring some covering for this naked soul,
Who I'll entreat to lead me."

The old guide remonstrates:

"Alack, sir! he is mad,"

and Gloster replies:

"'Tis the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind."

The old man departs, and Gloster, addressing his disguised son, says:

"Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues
Have humbled to all strokes:
. . . . . .
Dost thou know Dover?"

Edgar replies:

"Ay, master,"

and Gloster proceeds:

"There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
Looks fearfully in the confined deep,
Bring me but to the very brim of it,
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear
With something rich about me; from that place
I shall no leading need."

Edgar agrees to lead him to this cliff, Gloster evidently contemplating suicide, and still thinking his disguised son is a poor beggar, thus tries to reward him.

They depart on their strange walk to Dover, and the next scene is before Albany's palace, where Oswald, Goneril's trusted servant, tells her and Edmund, who arrive together, news which neither like to hear. Goneril asks:

"Now, where's your master?"

and Oswald replies:

"Madam, within; but never man so chang'd.
I told him of the army that was landed;
He smil'd at it: I told him you were coming;
His answer was '*The worse*'; of Gloster's treachery,
And of the loyal service of his son.
When I informed him, then he called me sot,
And told me I had turned the wrong side out."

Goneril, then angry and apprehensive, addresses Edmund, whom she begins to prefer to her husband:

"Then shall you go no further.
It is the cowish terror of his spirit.
. . . . . .
Back, Edmund, to my brother,
Hasten his musters and conduct his powers;
I must change arms at home, and give the distaff
Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
Shall pass between us."

She then reveals her love for Edmund, giving him a favour, and saying:

"Wear this; spare speech;
Decline your head: this kiss, if it durst speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.
Conceive, and fare thee well."

Edmund, probably overjoyed and hopeful, courteously replies:

"Yours in the ranks of death,"

and departs, when Goneril compares him to her despised husband, Albany:

"My most dear Gloster!
O! the difference of man and man.
To thee a woman's services are due;
My fool usurps my bed."

She imagines Albany either a fool or coward, perhaps both, but she has yet to discover that he is neither.

He now enters, and horrified at her conduct towards Lear, exclaims indignantly:

"O Goneril!
. . . . . .
. . . I fear your disposition:
That nature, which contemns its origin,
Cannot be border'd certain in itself;
She that herself will sliver and disbranch
From her material sap, perforce must wither
And come to deadly use."

Goneril contemptuously answers:

"No more; the text is foolish."

Albany more and more roused against her, rejoins:

"Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile;
. . . . . .
Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd?
A father, and a gracious aged man,
. . . . . .
Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.
. . . . . .
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
'Twill come.
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep."

Goneril replies, with scornful insolence:

"Milk-liver'd man!
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;
. . . . . .
Where's thy drum?
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,
. . . . . .
Whiles thou, a moral fool, sitt'st still, and criest
'*Alack! why does he so?*'"

Albany, in indignant horror, replies:

"Were't my fitness
To let these hands obey my blood,
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
Thy flesh and bones; howe'er thou art a fiend,
A woman's shape doth shield thee."

Goneril, with a ready sneer, retorts:

"Marry, your manhood now—"

but is interrupted by a messenger with the terrible news of Cornwall's death and the blinding of Gloster.

Albany, shocked and horrified, considers the savage Cornwall's death as the judgment of heaven, while deeply pitying the unfortunate Gloster. Goneril, partly pleased and partly alarmed, exclaims to herself:

"One way I like this well."

Then fearing lest her sister should take Edmund from her, adds:

"But being widow, and my Gloster with her,
May all the building in my fancy pluck
Upon my hateful life:"

and she goes out, resolving to send some answer to this intelligence.

Albany, hitherto ignorant of Edmund's character, asks:

"Knows he the wickedness?"

and the messenger, evidently well informed about Edmund's conduct to his father, replies:

"Ay, my good lord; 'twas he inform'd against him."

Albany then exclaims to himself, like the high-minded,

generous man he really is, though his character is not revealed till now:

> "Gloster, I live
> To thank thee for the love thou showd'st the king,
> And to revenge thine eyes."

He goes out, bidding the messenger tell him anything more he knows, and the next scene is in the French camp near Dover. Kent and a gentleman are here conversing about the French king, who has returned to France, leaving Cordelia and a French general named Le Far, who is never again mentioned. The French troops are probably joined by some of the English, their object being apparently to only rescue King Lear, but nothing is said about their proceedings. The gentleman then relates to Kent the emotion of Cordelia at learning of her father's ill-usage by her sisters:

> "Once or twice she heaved the name of 'father'
> Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;
> Cried 'Sisters! sisters! Shame of ladies! sisters!
> Kent! father! sisters! What! i' the storm? i' the night?
> Let pity not be believed!' There she shook
> The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
> And clamour-moisten'd, then away she started
> To deal with grief alone."

Kent then says that the poor broken-down king, repenting his past conduct, cannot at present bear to see this dutiful daughter:

> "A sovereign shame so elbows him; his own unkindness,
> That stripp'd her from his benediction, turned her
> To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights
> To his dog-hearted daughters."

Here Kent surely maligns the faithful canine race, usually, if not always, superior to such human specimens:

> "These things sting
> His mind so venomously that burning shame
> Detains him from Cordelia."

They then go to the king, and in the following scene Cordelia appears with a physician in a tent with soldiers, her husband's French subjects, yet likely joined by English allies. This imaginary French invasion of England,

Shakespeare invents for the sake of his tragedy, but introduces no Frenchmen. It might be his intention to indicate an English rising in favour of Lear, with only slight assistance from England's ancient foe. Cordelia hears that Lear is quite deranged in mind, and wanders about talking or singing to himself among the fields of his former obedient kingdom. She orders a careful search after him, and consults the physician about her father's reported mental condition, and exclaims :

> " Seek, seek for him,
> Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve the life
> That wants the means to lead it.
> . . . . . .
> . . . Oh, dear father !
> It is thy business that I go about ;
> Therefore, great France,
> My mourning and important tears hath pitied.
> No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
> But love, dear love, and our aged father's right."

The next scene is in Gloster's castle, now conferred with the title on Edmund, where the widow Regan meets Oswald, her sister Goneril's trusted servant, and who brings a letter for Edmund, which arouses Regan's jealous suspicions of her sister. Hitherto Goneril and Regan had been thoroughly united in feeling and policy, but their love, if such it can be called, for Edmund, now makes them deadly enemies. The remorseless Regan, who, like Goneril, thoroughly trusts the rascal, Oswald, now says to him, regretting that old Gloster had not been executed :

> " It was great ignorance,
> To let him live ; where he arrives he moves
> All hearts against us."

Oswald then says he must seek out Edmund to give him Goneril's letter. Regan then exclaims, full of jealous animosity :

> " Why should she write to Edmund ? Might not you
> Transport her purpose by word ? Belike,
> Something—I know not what. I'll love thee much,
> Let me unseal the letter."

She thus tries to tamper with Goneril's messenger,

while he, naturally alarmed or perplexed between these two dangerous ladies, both of whom he would like to please, hesitatingly replies:

"Madam, I had rather——"

when Regan interrupts him:

"I know your lady does not love her husband;
I am sure of that: and at her late being here
She gave strange oeilliads and most speaking looks
To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom."

Oswald now interrupts, perhaps imagining Regan means that Goneril loves him, and deprecating the idea:

"I, madam?"

and Regan, calmly explaining, proceeds:

"I speak in understanding; you are, I know 't.
Therefore I do advise you, take this note:
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd,
And more convenient is he for my hand
Than for your lady's. You must gather more
If you do find him, pray you give him this."

Then believing that she as a widow has more right to marry Edmund than her sister, Goneril, she adds:

"And when your mistress hears thus much from you
I pray desire her call her wisdom to her;
So fare you well."

Then recollecting that the poor Earl of Gloster is still living, and may make dangerous complaints of her and Goneril, Regan tempts Oswald to slay him:

"If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off."

Oswald devoted to both sisters eagerly rejoins:

"Would I could meet him, madam: I would show
What party I do follow."

He departs without apparently showing Goneril's secret letter to Edmund, the contents of which the jealous Regan suspects, both these sisters being now alike captivated by Edmund, who, bold, handsome, and courteous, for some time seems to please and deceive all he addresses.

The next scene is near Dover, where old Gloster and his son Edgar, the latter disguised as a peasant, and talking like one, are on the road to it. Edgar, doubtless guessing his unhappy father's contemplated suicide, stops at a safe place, pretending it is at the top of the dangerous cliff Gloster had previously named. He thus describes it to his father who never recognises him, in Shakespeare's noble style, in one of the finest passages for its length in the play:

"Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still.
How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles; half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice. . . . . The murmuring surge,
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong."

This vivid, terrific description never frightens the despairing Gloster, who, resolved on suicide, firmly answers, with an evident fatal purpose:

"Set me where you stand."

Edgar determines to save him, yet knowing he must be for the present deceived, replies:

"Give me your hand; you are now within a foot
Of the extreme verge; for all beneath the moon
Would I not leap upright."

His father calmly rejoins:

"Let go my hand.
Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel
Well worth a poor man's taking; fairies and gods
Prosper it with thee! Go thou farther off;
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going."

Edgar, pretending to leave, bids him farewell, exclaiming to himself:

"Why I do trifle thus with his despair
Is done to cure it."

Gloster then thinking himself unheard, addresses a devout prayer to those pagan gods in whose sight suicide was hardly deemed a crime:

> "O you mighty gods!
> This world I do renounce, and in your sights
> Shake patiently my great affliction off;
> . . . . . .
> If Edgar live, O, bless him!"

He attempts to leap, but merely falls unhurt on the ground, believing he has fallen down the cliff, while Edgar, pretending that he has, and raising him, asks, as if he were a stranger, doubtless in an altered voice:

> "What are you, sir?"

Gloster replies:

> "Away and let me die";

and Edgar proceeds, pretending to wonder at his safe fall:

> "Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,
> So many fathoms down precipitating,
> Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg; but thou dost breathe
> . . . . . .
> Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again."

Gloster asks:

> "But have I fallen or no?"

and Edgar, pretending not to perceive his blindness, replies:

> "From the dread summit of this chalky bourne,
> Look up a-height;"

Gloster sadly answers:

> "Alack! I have no eyes";

and Edgar rejoins:

> "Give me your arm:
> Up: So; how is't? Feel you your legs? You stand."

Gloster sadly answers, wishing he were dead:

> "Too well, too well."

Edgar rejoins, keeping up his poor father's delusion for his sake:

"This is above all strangeness,"

and asks him who it was that lately parted from him. Gloster imagines it was some beggar, evidently not recognising the same man in Edgar, who trying to comfort him and explain how his attempt at suicide failed, exclaims:

"Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours
Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee."

Gloster, reconciled to live if the gods desire it, replies:

"I do remember now; henceforth I'll bear
Affliction till it do cry out itself,
'Enough, enough,' and die."

While they are speaking, Lear appears, now quite insane, fantastically dressed with flowers. The disguised Edgar at once recognises the old king, who though raving and wild in his words is bitterly referring to his ungrateful daughters. Gloster himself knows Lear's voice, and asks:

"The trick of that voice I do well remember: Is 't not the king?"

Lear catches up the word and wildly exclaims:

"Ay, every inch a king;
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes."

During his vague, rambling talk, he often alludes to his late treatment, while seeming to abhor human nature in strange repulsive language, when Gloster, at the sound of his once respected voice, recalling old times, exclaims:

"O! let me kiss that hand."

Lear replies:

"Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality,"

and Gloster, now knowing Lear's real condition, though unable to see him, exclaims:

"O ruin'd piece of nature!
. . . Dost thou know me?"

Lear at first answers vaguely, his distracted mind hurrying from one subject to another, yet he partly perceives that Gloster is blind, and says:

"A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?"

To this sudden, yet simple question, Gloster answers:

"Ay, sir,"

and the crazy king proceeds with a strange mixture of common-sense and mental distraction:

"And the creature run from the cur? There thou might'st behold the great image of authority; a dog's obeyed in office. . . . .

. . . . . .

Get thee glass eyes;
And, like a scurvy politician, seem
To see the things thou dost not."

Lear's extraordinary language, so wild, disordered, yet full of meaning, compels Edgar to express his feelings:

"O! matter and impertinency mix'd;
Reason in madness."

Lear, as if vaguely guessing from their sad voices that they pity him, but unable to keep his mind long upon any subject, yet recognises his former subject, while too confused to ask him questions.

"If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes;
I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloster;
Thou must be patient."

Here he again seems to lose his subject, and vaguely proceeds:

"I will preach to thee: mark.

. . . . . .

When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools."

Recollections of his present state then make him break off and devise or compose a plot against his triumphant foes:

"It were a delicate stratagem to shoe
A troop of horse with felt; I'll put 't in proof,
And when I have stol'n upon these sons-in-law
Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!"

At this moment the friendly gentleman who had spoken to Kent, appears with attendants, exclaiming, though with all respect:

> "O! here he is; lay hand upon him. Sir,
> Your most dear daughter——"

He means Cordelia, but Lear, alarmed, and fancying himself arrested, exclaims:

> "No rescue? What! a prisoner? I am even
> The natural fool of fortune. Use me well;
> You shall have ransom."

Then as if conscious of an injured brain, and attributing it to wounds, he asks:

> "Let me have surgeons;
> I am cut to the brains."

The gentleman, anxious to soothe him, replies:

> "You shall have anything,"

while Lear confused, yet never really terrified, occasionally remembers who he is, but cannot hold the same idea long.

The varied sketches of Lear when maddened for a time by misfortune, of the jester, always of weak intellect, and of Edgar, a man of sound sense assuming madness, are so strangely yet forcibly contrasted, that perhaps only medical men, specially studying mental derangements, could appreciate them or decide if they are true or not to real nature.

Lear, amid his excitement and distraction, again remembers himself, exclaiming between command and entreaty:

> "Come, come, I am a king.
> My masters, know you that?"

The gentleman, trying to calm him, rejoins:

> "You are a royal one, and we obey you."

These words, though unable to restore Lear's senses, yet prevent his becoming desperate, and he replies in giddy confusion, as if somewhat relieved:

> "Then there's life in't. Nay, an you get it, you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa,"

and he runs off, thinking he has made his escape, but is followed by attendants, who evidently care for his safety.

Meantime, Edgar and the gentleman converse about the impending battle of Goneril's and Regan's forces with the French rescuers, and probably some English allies joining Cordelia. The gentleman, whose name is never given, then departs, leaving Gloster and Edgar alone. The former vainly asks Edgar who he is, but the latter still conceals his name from his father, while leading him and receiving his thanks.

Oswald now appears before them, eager to slay Gloster for the promised reward. Edgar assumes the accent and words of a poor peasant and no longer talks like a madman. Oswald, recognising the helpless Gloster, eagerly exclaims:

> "A proclaim'd prize! Most happy!
> That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh
> To raise my fortunes."

Then addressing his intended victim with a charitable interest in his future:

> "Thou old unhappy traitor,
> Briefly thyself remember: the sword is out
> That must destroy thee."

Gloster aware of his danger though seeing nothing, and no longer wishing for death, appeals to Edgar:

> "Now let thy friendly hand
> Put strength enough to't."

Edgar comes forward, and Oswald, seeing himself opposed, exclaims:

> "Wherefore, bold peasant,
> Darest thou support a publish'd traitor?
> . . . . . .
> Let go his arm."

Edgar, speaking in a coarse country dialect, replies:

> "Chill not let go, zur, without vurther 'casion.'

Oswald only retorts:

> "Let go, slave, or thou diest."

Edgar continues speaking in a style which both deceives and provokes Oswald:

"Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass. . . . . Nay, come not near th' old man; keep out, che vor ye, or ise try whither your costard or my ballow[1] be the harder. Chill be plain with you."

Oswald, in scornful rage, retorts:

"Out, dunghill!"

to which Edgar calmly replies:

"Chill pick your teeth, zur. Come; no matter vor your foins."

They fight, and Edgar, doubtless a skilled swordsman, inflicts a mortal wound on the wretch, Oswald, who falls exclaiming:

"Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse";

then as if anxious, as some other villains have been said to be about their burial:

"If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body;
And give the letters which thou find'st about me
To Edmund, Earl of Gloster; seek him out.
. . . . . .
O! untimely death."

Still full of base plots, he expires, while Edgar exclaims, recognising him:

"I know thee well, a serviceable villain;
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire."

He then examines the dead wretch's letters, finding one from Goneril to Edmund. This wicked, most important missive tempts Edmund to murder her husband, Albany, and marry her, in these decisive words:

"Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many opportunities to cut him off. . . . . There is nothing done if he return the conqueror; then am I the prisoner; . . . . whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labour.

Your—wife, so I would say—

Affectionate servant,

GONERIL."

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[1] Staff.

Edgar, on reading this, exclaims, in horrified astonishment:

> "A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,
> And the exchange my brother!"

He then hides the letter, resolved to show it to Albany on the first opportunity.

He leads away his helpless father, intending to bestow him "with a friend," and then devote himself to Albany's service, and take active part in the impending contest.

The next scene is in the French camp, where Lear is on a bed asleep, attended by a physician, while Cordelia enters with Kent, whom she warmly thanks for his steady devotion to the unfortunate king, whose violent, ungovernable temper had indeed been the cause of all their misfortunes and his own. Kent, the model of a thoroughly honest man, frankly answers:

> "To be acknowledged, madam, is o'er-paid.
> All my reports go with the modest truth,
> Nor more, nor clipp'd, but so."

Cordelia then prays for her sleeping father:

> "O you kind gods,
> Cure this great breach in his abused nature!
> The untun'd and jarring senses, O! wind up
> Of this child-changed father."

The physician now proposes to wake Lear, who has not yet received his daughter. When he awakes he is at first too confused or weak to remember where he is or who are with him. At length Cordelia addresses him:

> "O! look upon me, sir,
> And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.
> No, sir, you must not kneel."

Lear, evidently confused at her respect and affection, hardly believing she is in earnest, replies, gradually remembering who and where he is:

> "Pray, do not mock me;
> I am a very foolish fond old man,
> And to deal plainly,
> I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
> Methinks I should know you and know this man

Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant
What place this is.
. . . . . .
Nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night."

His mind, gradually regaining strength, though still confused, he continues, at first doubtful, then with a burst of recognition:

"Do not laugh at me;
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia."

She answers:

"And so I am, I am."

Lear, remembering her voice, at the same time recalls his own conduct to her, as she weeps, and he exclaims in confused self-reproach:

"Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not:
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not."

Cordelia, ever dutiful, and whose angelic character seems incapable of resenting injury, replies with more affection than truth:

"No cause, no cause."

Lear, vaguely remembering her marriage with the French king, asks:

"Am I in France?"

to which question the loyal Kent, who could never endure his king's abdication, proudly replies:

"In your own kingdom, sir."

Lear, hardly believing in the sudden respect now shown him, answers:

"Do not abuse me,"

while the physician here interposes, his valuable medical experience specially enabling him to well understand the

king's mental as well as bodily condition. He says to Cordelia:

> "Be comforted, good madam; the great rage
> You see, is kill'd in him; and yet it is danger
> To make him even o'er the time he has lost.
> Desire him to go in; trouble him no more
> Till further settling."

Cordelia, with the same respect she has always shown to her passionate, unfortunate father, addresses him like a dutiful subject:

> "Will 't please your highness walk?"

Lear now convinced who she is, and who are with him, yet weak and confused while full of thanks, feebly replies:

> "You must bear with me.
> Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish."

He, Cordelia, the physician and attendants, withdraw, while Kent and the loyal gentleman who does not recognise him converse about the approaching battle, and know that Edmund now commands Regan's forces in place of her late husband, Cornwall. Though both Kent and the gentleman are on Lear's side, the former preserves his disguise, and they part, apparently not together, yet in the same opinion and devotion to the cause of Lear.

The fifth, and last Act begins in the English camp near Dover, where Regan and Edmund are together, in nominal alliance with Albany and Goneril, but all three distrust Albany, while the two sisters are both in love with Edmund. The latter is now almost at the summit of his guilty ambition. He, the illegitimate son of Gloster, has obtained his father's rank and fortune while heading Regan's forces, and beloved alike by her and her sister. Edmund and Regan, however, are now disappointed at the non-return of the slain Oswald, the trusty go-between of the wicked sisters. Regan, jealous of Goneril, tries to prejudice Edmund against her, but he, equally deceitful, apparently cares no more for one than for the other, while craftily professing respectful devotion to both. These odious princesses, though hardened against everybody else, being equally

captivated by Edmund, begin for the first time to hate each other. Regan, though savage as a tigress, now tries to cajole or win over Edmund, who is quite her match, perhaps even more so, in profound, selfish duplicity. She asks, with insinuating coaxing words:

> "Now, sweet lord,
> You know the goodness I intend upon you:
> Tell me, but truly, but then speak the truth,
> Do you not love my sister?"

Edmund guardedly replies:

> "In honour'd love."

But she is hardly satisfied with this answer, and proceeds:

> "I never shall endure her: dear my lord,
> Be not familiar with her."

Edmund, wishing to lull her suspicions, calmly replies:

> "Fear me not;"

and then enter Goneril and Albany. The former reveals her overpowering jealousy of Regan by saying to herself at seeing her sister and Edmund together:

> "I had rather lose the battle than that sister
> Should loosen him and me."

Albany, hitherto ignorant of the real characters of his wife and her sister, but gradually understanding them, thus reveals his aversion to the war, though compelled by his position to act in alliance with Goneril and Regan:

> "The king is come to his daughter,
> With others whom the rigour of our state
> Forc'd to cry out. Where I could not be honest,
> I never yet was valiant: for this business,
> It toucheth us, as France invades our land,
> Not bolds the king, with others, whom, I fear,
> Most just and heavy causes make oppose."

Edmund, a most consummate hypocrite, always self-controlled, replies:

> "Sir, you speak nobly,"

while the more violent tempers of Regan and Goneril make

them openly scorn and distrust Albany, who reluctantly agrees to take chief command in the coming battle.

As they go out, Edgar appears disguised, and obtains a short private interview with Albany, to whom he delivers the all-important letter, found upon Oswald's body, from Goneril to Edmund, advising Albany's murder. Edgar says:

"Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
For him that brought it: wretched though I seem,
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouched there.
. . . . . .
. . . Let but the herald cry,
And I'll appear again."

Edgar departs, leaving the letter with Albany, and Edmund returns announcing the enemy is in view. Albany hastens to the scene, and Edmund, in soliloquy, briefly reviews his present extraordinary position.

At first sight there seems something almost ludicrous in the perplexity of this dangerous man, placed as it were between two fires, in the rival sisters loving him, but in this terrible tragedy there is no cause for merriment. All is sad and terrible, though highly interesting, and as a study of human nature most instructive. Edmund evidently cares no more for one than for the other of these princesses, who, despite their hardened natures, are alike completely captivated by this attractive, accomplished deceiver. He exclaims with cautious cunning, perhaps with some sarcasm, quite determined and absorbed in his personal ambition:

"To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
Each jealous of the other, as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd
If both remain alive: to take the widow
Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril;
And hardly shall I carry out my side,
Her husband being alive. Now then, we'll use
His countenance for the battle; which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking off."

Having thus shaped his hateful policy towards Albany and the princesses, the remorseless villain proceeds, knowing the former's merciful nature:

"As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
The battle done, and they within our power,
Shall never see his pardon: for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate."

He withdraws, and the next scene is in a field between the two camps. Edgar is with his father, Gloster, to whom he announces the defeat of Lear's rescuers and his capture, together with that of Cordelia, by the forces of Goneril and Regan, respectively commanded by Albany and Edmund, now styled Earl of Gloster. Edgar then leads his helpless father away to some safer place, and the following most important scene in the concluding play is in the English camp near Dover. Edmund is here victorious and in command, Lear and Cordelia being now his prisoners, and he haughtily exclaims:

"Some officers take them away: good guard,
Until their greater pleasures first be known,
That are to censure them."

Cordelia mildly addresses her father and fellow-captive:

"We are not the first
Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the worst.
For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down;
Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown."

She then asks, perhaps addressing Edmund:

"Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?"

Lear, who has no wish to see them, and is now wholly absorbed in love and gratitude towards his one dutiful daughter, exclaims, perhaps hardly comprehending his actual situation:

"No, no, no, no!
Come, let's away to prison;
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness:
. . . . . .
And we'll wear out,
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones
That ebb and flow by the moon."

Edmund, utterly unmoved and hardened, quite engrossed by personal ambition, says to his followers:

"Take them away;"

and Lear proceeds:

"Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense.
Have I caught thee?
He that parts us shall bring a brand from Heaven
And fire us hence like foxes."

They depart as prisoners, and Edmund gives secret orders about them to a subordinate officer in these ominous words:

"Take thou this note:
Go follow them to prison.
One step I have advanc'd thee;
. . . . . .
To be tender-minded
Does not become a sword;
. . . . . .
Either say thou'lt do it,
Or thrive by other means."

His officer replies:

"I'll do't, my lord,"

and the villain, Edmund, almost in the words of Richard III., when giving somewhat similar fatal orders, rejoins:

"About it; and write happy when thou hast done."

The man departs, and Goneril, Regan and Albany appear with attendants. Albany, who though now supreme, distrusts Edmund and the two princesses, coldly congratulates Edmund on the victory, and demands the surrender to him of Lear and Cordelia. Edmund replies:

"Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable king
To some retention and appointed guard,
. . . . . .
With him I sent the queen: and they are ready
To-morrow, or at further space, to appear
Where you shall hold your session. At this time
We sweat and bleed; the friend hath lost his friend
And the best quarrels, in the heat, are cursed
By those that feel their sharpness:
The question of Cordelia and her father
Requires a fitter place."

Edmund's new importance and presuming style offend Albany, who replies with dignity:

> "Sir, by your patience,
> I hold you but a subject of this war,
> Not as a brother."

These words arouse Regan, who hoping to marry Edmund and share power with him equal to that of Albany, exclaims proudly:

> "That 's as we list to grace him:
> Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,
> Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,
> Bore the commission of my place and person;
> The which immediacy may well stand up,
> And call itself your brother."

Goneril's jealousy now breaks forth, as she exclaims:

> "Not so hot;
> In his own grace he doth exalt himself
> More than in your addition."

Regan haughtily retorts:

> "In my rights,
> By me invested, he compeers the best."

Goneril sarcastically rejoins:

> "That were the most, if he should husband you,"

and Regan, evidently irritated, answers:

> "Jesters do oft prove prophets."

Goneril, enraged, yet trying to command her passion, scornfully exclaims:

> "Holla, holla!
> That eye that told you so look'd but a-squint."

These hateful sisters, hardened and callous towards every one except Edmund, are thus made by Shakespeare to hate each other with fatal consequences, as Regan, feeling ill, but not knowing why, replies to her sister:

> "Lady, I am not well, else I should answer
> From a full flowing stomach."

Then addressing Edmund, with passionate devotion :

" General,
Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony :
Dispose of them, of me ; the walls are thine
Witness the world, that I create thee here
My lord and master."

Goneril, in hardly suppressed rage, asks :

" Mean you to enjoy him ? "

Albany, who now knows all about the detestable trio beside him, and appreciates them accordingly, calmly observes, with some sarcasm :

" The let-alone lies not in your good will."

Edmund, thinking he can now defy Albany, retorts :

" Nor in thine, lord."

To him Albany haughtily replies, alluding to Edmund's illegitimacy :

" Half-blooded fellow, yes."

Regan then exclaims to Edmund :

" Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine."

Albany now knows it is time to proclaim his private knowledge and supreme power together, and exclaims, doubtless to the astonishment of his three guilty hearers :

" Stay yet, hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee
On capital treason ; and in thine arrest
This gilded serpent." [*Pointing to Goneril.*

Then in bitter, but well-deserved sarcasm, he addresses Regan :

" For your claim, fair sister,
I bar it in the interest of my wife ;
'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,
And I, her husband, contradict your banns.
If you will marry, make your love to me,
My lady is bespoke."

Goneril here exclaims :

" An interlude ! "

and stops as if confounded at her plots being discovered, and wishing to gain time; while Albany now thoroughly master of the situation, addressing Edmund by his usurped title, exclaims:

> "Thou art arm'd, Gloster; let the trumpet sound;
> If none appear to prove upon thy person
> Thy heinous, manifest and many treasons,
> There is my pledge; [*Throwing down a glove.*
> I 'll make it on thy heart,
> Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
> Than I have here proclaim'd thee."

The wretched Regan unconsciously reveals the truth, exclaiming of herself:

> "Sick! O, sick!"

while Goneril to herself explains the cause in words of fearful meaning:

> "If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine."

Meantime Edmund throws down his glove accepting Albany's challenge. Each summons a herald, but Albany is alone obeyed, as he says to Edmund:

> "Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,
> All levied in my name, have in my name
> Took their discharge."

Regan, becoming rapidly worse under the effects of the poison, and no longer able to take part in this terrible scene, again exclaims:

> "My sickness grows upon me,"

and is led away by Albany's order.

A herald then reads out Albany's defiance, and at the sound of the third trumpet Edgar appears armed and unexpected by all except Albany. He defies Edmund, who never recognises him, to mortal combat, declaring that despite his valour and good fortune, he is a thorough traitor:

> "False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,
> Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,
> And, from the extremest upward of thy head
> To the descent and dust below thy foot,
> A most toad-spotted traitor."

Edmund indignantly denying the charge, they instantly fight, and Edgar mortally wounds his wicked brother, who falls.

At this crisis, Goneril eagerly interposes, exclaiming:

> "This is practice, Gloster.
> By the law of arms thou wast not bound to answer
> An unknown opposite, thou art not vanquish'd
> But cozen'd and beguil'd."

Albany, fully knowing her guilt, exclaims, with decisive effect:

> "Shut your mouth, dame,
> Or with this paper shall I stop it. Hold, sir.
> Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil."

He apparently presents or shows Goneril's letter to her, and she vainly tries to snatch it as he exclaims:

> "No tearing, lady; I perceive you know it,"

and gives it to Edmund. Then Goneril, in a fit of impotent rage for the last time, exclaims:

> "Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine;
> Who shall arraign me for 't?" [*Exit.*

She evidently rushes wildly off after these few words of defiance, as Albany exclaims:

> "Go after her, she's desperate, govern her,"

and asks Edmund:

> "Most monstrous! Knowest thou this paper?"

and Edmund, as if conscience-struck and sinking fast, replies:

> "Ask me not what I know."

Then, knowing all is over with him, Edmund proceeds to confess his long-concealed guilt, replying to Albany's question:

> "What you have charg'd me with, that have I done.
> And more, much more; the time will bring it out.
> 'Tis past, and so am I——"

Then addressing his slayer, he asks:

"But what art thou
That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,
I do forgive thee."

Edgar rejoins:

"Let's exchange charity.
I am no less in blood than thou art.
If more, the more thou hast wrong'd me,
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son,"

and in deep reproach, recalling his illegitimate brother's baseness to their father, he exclaims:

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us."

The dying Edmund replies:

"Thou hast spoken right, 'tis true.
The wheel is come full circle; I am here."

Albany, congratulating the wronged Edgar, now victorious, says, alluding to his previous disguise:

"Methought thy very gait did prophesy
A royal nobleness—I must embrace thee.
Let sorrow split my heart if ever I
Did hate thee or thy father."

Edgar warmly replies:

"Worthy prince, I know it."

Albany asks where he concealed himself, and how he came to know of his poor father's miseries, and Edgar describes his own dangerous escape, also how he met and protected his helpless, injured father, who has just died from the effects of over excitement:

"Became his guide,
Led him, begg'd for him, saved him from despair:
Never (Oh fault!) reveal'd myself unto him,
Until some half-hour past, when I was arm'd;
Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,
I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last
Told him my pilgrimage; but his flaw'd heart,
Alack! too weak the conflict to support;
'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
Burst smilingly."

This pathetic record, uttered at such a moment by the avenging Edgar, has its effect even on the wicked Edmund. He is now cut off in the midst of his sins, and with all his hopes of power and pleasure blasted at the moment of acquisition, he cannot help in his weakened, dying state recognising a divine judgement. Though the guilty cause of as much sin and misery as either Iago or Richard III., he does not at his end reveal the same remorseless spirit, but as if finally overcome by defeat, detection, and approaching death, almost at the same moment exclaims as if a different man:

> "This speech of yours hath moved me,
> And shall perchance do good; but speak you on.
> You look as you had something more to say."

Edgar then tells him, and the noble, sympathising Albany, of the faithful Kent's devotion to the king, his dangers and disguises, and how when meeting his old fellow-subjects, Gloster and himself, he

> "Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him
> That ever ear received; which in recounting
> His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life
> Began to crack: twice then the trumpets sounded,
> And there I left him tranced."

A gentleman now hastily enters, announcing that Regan is poisoned by Goneril, who confessed the crime, and then committed suicide. Edmund exclaims at these fearful news:

> "I was contracted to them both: all three
> Now marry in an instant,"

while Albany, who though shocked and horrified at such guilt around him, remains firm as a rock, and says:

> "Produce their bodies.
> This judgement of the heavens, that makes us tremble
> Touches us not with pity."

Kent now enters, seeking the captive king, when Albany exclaims:

> "Great thing of us forgot.
> Speak, Edmund, where's the King! and where's Cordelia?"

The bodies of Goneril and Regan are here brought in, and at sight of them Edmund is still able to exclaim :

> "Yet Edmund was beloved :
> The one the other poison'd for my sake,
> And after slew herself."

To these words Albany, knowing their truth, sternly rejoins :

> "Even so. Cover their faces."

Then Edmund, though sinking, rouses himself for a last effort, a desperate one indeed, yet showing some sign of a too late repentance :

> "I pant for life : some good I mean to do
> Despite of mine own nature."

He then owns that he and Regan had ordered the execution of Cordelia, who was to be accused of suicide, and that Lear also was to share her fate. Edgar rushes off to rescue Cordelia while the dying Edmund is borne off.

At this time Lear enters, bearing Cordelia dead in his arms. He imagines at first that she still breathes, exclaiming before Albany, Kent, and Edgar :

> "This feather stirs ! She lives ! If it be so
> It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
> That ever I have felt."

Kent kneels, vainly trying to attract the king's notice, but the latter passionately exclaims when gradually despairing of Cordelia's recovery :

> "Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha !
> What is't thou sayest ? Her voice was ever soft,
> Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman."

Then with a last flash of his former spirit he exclaims :

> "I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee."

An officer in attendance confirms this news, yet the wretched slave being only the instrument of Regan and Edmund, his death was hardly a vindication of justice.

This incident is perhaps introduced to show the last

spark of Lear's former spirit and energy. The faithful Kent tries to make himself known to his king, who utterly distracted by grief and trouble hardly notices him, except in one sentence, when apparently recognising him for the moment, he briefly exclaims :

"You are welcome hither."

He hears with scarcely any notice of the fate of Goneril and Regan, when an officer announces Edmund's death, which Albany terms "a trifle" compared to the tragic scene before him. Lear, at length sure of Cordelia's death, no longer wishes his own life prolonged. He exclaims in final despair :

"And my poor fool is hang'd ! No, no, no life !
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all ? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never ! "

At the fifth repetition of this fatal word, Lear's breath evidently fails him, and he exclaims to those around him, as if choking with emotion :

"Pray you undo this button " ;

this service being at once rendered, he says with a touch of former courtesy :

"Thank you, sir."

Then with a last look at her whose virtues he has never before appreciated, he utters his last words :

"Do you see this ? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there ! "

and these words end his troubled life.

Albany then addresses Kent and Edgar, now the only three survivors of much importance in this tragedy, and who are united in sympathy and friendship :

"Friends of my soul, you twain
Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain."

Kent, whose whole mind and thoughts are always devoted to the king, replies :

"I have a journey, sir, shortly to go,
My master calls me,—I must not say no " ;

and Albany proceeds, apparently addressing Edgar:

> "The weight of this sad time we must obey;
> The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
> Shall never see so much, nor live so long."

These words end this grand tragedy in which Shakespeare's utmost powers are shown, though entirely on the pathetic side. The play, though of intense interest throughout, contains really no comic element; it is either sad or serious from beginning to end. The so-called jester or fool, whose fate is never distinctly mentioned, unless by Lear in one vague sentence which may refer either to him or to Cordelia, is never merry, and has certainly no reason to be so. He is always true to the king, but his fantastic talk during Lear's distress, and his attempts at warning the misguided king, have nothing cheerful about them, though occasionally displaying some flashes of his professional wit.

The vehement, wilful old sovereign had indeed brought complete ruin on himself and many of those devoted to him, though Albany, Kent and Edgar survive in melancholy triumph. Lear was apparently a complete despot at first, freely threatening his subjects with death or banishment, and encountering no remonstrance, far less opposition, from any one except the submissive imploring Kent. The king's downfall therefore though pitiable to the last degree, and described with all the power and eloquence of England's greatest poet, scarcely entitles him to the loyal, unlimited devotion of such characters as Cordelia, Kent and Gloster. Their sincere affection for such a wayward monarch proves that Lear is never in his best days during this play. He was evidently in former times kind, just and beneficent, but sinking almost into dotage, or something approaching it, when this tragedy begins. He thus storms and rages at those who love him, and confers all wealth and power on his two daughters, Goneril and Regan, whom he must have known from childhood, but who deceive him as completely as if they had been utter strangers endowed with rare powers of deceit. The thorough success, however, achieved by unscrupulous persons in dealing with

those most intimate with them, Shakespeare minutely describes in other plays, both fanciful and historical.

Thus in Othello the imaginary villain, Iago, completely deceives not only his commander but his friends, Cassio and Roderigo, together with his own wife, Emilia.

In Richard III., the artful monarch deceives his two elder brothers, as well as a number of English courtiers familiar with him, as successfully as if they had never known him from his youth; and this account seems certainly verified in the pages of history.

In like manner the imaginary King Lear with his three daughters around him shows at the opening of the play a practical ignorance of their differing characters, which would seem impossible in real life, were not instances of a similar kind occasionally found in the pages of impartial history. Indeed, nothing can be more brilliant, prosperous and promising than King Lear's apparent position at the beginning of this play. He is surrounded by faithful subjects, there is no rival to his throne, his three daughters all in manner equally obedient and dutiful, the foreign princes of France and Burgundy spending a complimentary visit at his Court, and his two future sons-in-law, Albany and Cornwall, probably the most powerful of his subjects, alike apparently respectful and loyal. No reader could indeed foresee or in any way apprehend the fearful progress of events in this tragedy from its peaceful and happy commencement, and Lear seems in many respects the spoiled child of too much power, happiness and good fortune.

Shakespeare in this play, more perhaps than in any other, indicates belief in people being morally better or worse than is thought possible by some philosophical moralists. It is a common idea that among human beings the good and the evil have alike their faults and their redeeming qualities, though in very unequal degrees. But in King Lear, Shakespeare indicates a rather different opinion. Thus Cordelia, Albany, the French king, Kent and Edgar are represented without either guilt or weakness. Everything they say and do seems worthy of a better world and of a higher nature than human life presents.

On the other hand, Goneril and Regan, Cornwall, Edmund and Oswald seem no better than human ideas of evil spirits endowed with worldly desires and limited in power by human restraints, but in nature really diabolical. In fact, all the above characters seem the extremes of good and evil incarnate. Lear and Gloster, who perhaps are more natural, are alike compounded of good and evil qualities, and much resemble each other in both conduct and personal history. They are generous, kind and straightforward, yet violent, passionate and almost implacable in resentment.

Perhaps among the most remarkable features of this noble tragedy is the steady, strict consistency of its various personages. They seem as if described from either the poet's individual knowledge, or from information given him by personal acquaintances. Yet, in reality, all is due to Shakespeare's mind alone, guided by a knowledge of mankind never surpassed, if equalled, in the history of our mortal race.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

THE scene of this lively and beautiful play is laid at or near Athens in its pagan days. The first scene is there, in the palace of Theseus, Duke of Athens, who is about to marry Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. Although endowed with Greek names and surroundings, this distinguished couple might well represent an English prince and princess, while the subordinate personages, though called Greeks, show a singular mixture of classic Greek and English in their names. In taste and style Theseus and Hippolyta rather resemble rural English nobility of former times in their love of hunting and promoting popular festivity, but their beautiful language is that of Shakespeare alone, and such indeed as neither Greeks or English, even the most accomplished, could probably command. Their marriage is to be celebrated four days after the play begins, and Hippolyta says to the impatient Theseus:

> "Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
> Four days will quickly dream away the time;
> And then the moon, like to a silver bow
> New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
> Of our solemnities."

Theseus, wishing to encourage general festivity, says to his master of sports:

> "Go, Philostrate,
> Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments,"

and then addressing her, says:

"Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling."

An elderly Greek named Egeus, with his daughter Hermia, now appears with two young Greeks, Lysander and Demetrius, the former loving and loved by Hermia, whose father wishes her to marry Demetrius. Egeus is evidently an irritable or arbitrary father, and complains of his daughter to Theseus, who wishes to be friendly and gracious to both, but has to enforce the very severe Athenian laws. Egeus thus appeals to the Duke, who seems to reign independently of any other authority:

"Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius,
. . . . . .
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander:
. . . . . .
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love-tokens with my child;
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With feigning voice, verses of feigning love;
And stol'n the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays,
. . . . . .
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness. And my gracious duke
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her;
Which shall be either to this gentleman,
Or to her death, according to our law."

Theseus, rather pitying Hermia, yet knowing Egeus has the law on his side, asks:

"What say you, Hermia? be advised, fair maid.
To you your father should be as a god;
. . . . . .
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman."

Hermia promptly replies:

"So is Lysander,"

and Theseus rejoins:

"In himself he is;
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier."

Upon Hermia's asking what penalty she may incur by rejecting Demetrius, Theseus declares that she must then either die or become a nun. Theseus describes a convent life in a way which of course no pagan prince could have done, but in this play, as in many others, while the scenes and characters may be nominally classic or foreign, the ideas they express or suggest are thoroughly English, though conveyed in words which only Shakespeare has ever been able to command. Addressing Hermia, the Athenian duke says decisively, but not unkindly, and forced apparently to insist on rules or penalties, owing to the position he holds:

"Fair Hermia, question your desires;
. . . . . .
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun,
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
. . . . . .
Thrice blessed they that master so their blood,
. . . . . .
But earthly happier is the rose distill'd,
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn
Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness."

Hermia firmly answers:

"So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield
. . . . . .
Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty."

Theseus considerately replies:

"Take time to pause; and by the next new moon
. . . . . .
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
Or on Diana's altar to protest
For aye austerity and single life."

Demetrius vainly appeals to Hermia:

"Relent, sweet Hermia; and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right."

The other, with a touch of sarcasm, retorts:

"You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him,"

when Egeus, evidently a stern parent, exclaims:

"Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love.
And what is mine my love shall render him;
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius."

Lysander answers with truth and spirit:

"I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possess'd; my love is more than his;
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
. . . . . .
And which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia,
Why should not I then prosecute my right?"

Then alluding to his rival:

"Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man."

Theseus, who rather sides with Lysander, and wishes to make all happy, replies:

"I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;
. . . . . .
But, Demetrius, come
And come, Egeus; you shall go with me,
. . . . . .
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will,
. . . . . .
Come, my Hippolyta."

Theseus thus breaks up the conference, postponing the question of Hermia for the present. All now withdraw, leaving Hermia and Lysander alone together, which in

reality Egeus and Demetrius would hardly have consented to do under the circumstances. But in this instance, as in some others, though not often, the poet makes probabilities yield to dramatic or stage effect. The lovers at first converse in the beautiful, natural, yet poetic language of which Shakespeare is such an unrivalled master. Lysander asks her:

> "Why is your cheek so pale!
> How chance the roses there do fade so fast?"

She answers sadly:

> "Belike for want of rain, which I could well
> Beteem them from the tempest of mine eyes."

Lysander joins in the celebrated words:

> "Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
> . . . . . .
> The course of true love never did run smooth."

After more sentimental talk between the lovers, Hermia says:

> "If then true lovers have been ever cross'd,
> It stands as an edict in destiny:
> Then let us teach our trial patience,
> Because it is a customary cross,
> As due to love, as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
> Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers."

Lysander, becoming more practical, replies:

> "A good persuasion; therefore, hear me, Hermia.
> I have a widow aunt, a dowager
> Of great revenue, and she hath no child:
> From Athens is her house remote seven leagues:
> And she respects me as her only son.
> There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee,
> And to that place the sharp Athenian law
> Cannot pursue us."

He then asks her to meet him the next night in a wood about a league from Athens, where he will await her on their flight to his aunt's abode, and Hermia replies in that singularly beautiful, expressive language which so distinguishes this exquisite play:

> "My good Lysander!
> I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
> By his best arrow with the golden head,
> . . . . . .
> By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,"

then alluding to the far-famed history or tradition of Dido and Eneas, centuries later immortalised by Virgil:

> "And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,
> When the false Trojan under sail was seen.
> . . . . . .
> By all the vows that ever men have broke,
> In number more than ever women spoke,
> In that same place thou hast appointed me,
> To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lysander replies:

> "Keep promise, love,"

and Helena now appears, who is in love with Demetrius, and has an eager talk with Hermia about that youth. Helena eagerly exclaims:

> "My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
> My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
> . . . . . .
> O! teach me how you look, and with what art
> You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart."

Hermia answers to this eager question:

> "I frown upon him, yet he loves me still."

Helena rejoins:

> "O! that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill."

Hermia:

> "The more I hate, the more he follows me."

Helena:

> "The more I love, the more he hateth me."

Hermia:

> "His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine."

Helena:

> "None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine."

Hermia:

> "Take comfort; he no more shall see my face;
> Lysander and myself will fly this place."

Lysander then reveals to Helena his plan to escape with Hermia, which evidently meets with Helena's own

views, and Hermia exclaims to Helena as she departs with Lysander:

> "Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us;
> And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!"

Helena exclaims to herself when alone:

> "How happy some o'er other some can be!
> Through Athens I am thought as fair as she;
> But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
> He will not know what all but he do know;
> . . . . . .
> For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
> He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
> . . . . . .
> I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
> Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
> Pursue her; and for this intelligence
> If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
> But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
> To have his sight thither and back again."

The next scene is indeed a complete change from somewhat fantastic sentiment to rather low, but never vulgar comedy. A set of tradesmen and artisans—Nick Bottom a weaver, Peter Quince a carpenter, Snug a joiner, Flute a bellows-mender, Snout a tinker, and Starveling a tailor—meet in Quince's house to arrange about a play which they intend performing before Duke Theseus on the occasion of his marriage with Hippolyta. These men are not only thoroughly English in name, style, and occupation, but in their liking for acting, and yet ignorance of its rules or management, to some extent may resemble country people living near London in Shakespeare's time. They had probably seen acting and were delighted with it, while almost ignorant of its professional requirements and details. Bottom, who apparently has more common-sense or more to say than the rest of the company, both questions and lectures Quince, their nominal manager, about the contemplated play as to how it should be properly performed, evidently thinking he himself knows best. He begins:

> "First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point."

Quince:

"Marry, our play is, 'The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe.'"

Bottom condescendingly patronises and criticises alternately:

"A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll."

Then to the company he says:

"Masters, spread yourselves."

Quince:

"You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus. . . . a lover that kills himself most gallantly for love."

Bottom gratified yet full of comic conceit about his own taste and supposed talent for acting, replies:

"That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms. . . . . My chief humour is for a tyrant:"

And he then pompously declaims:

"I could play Ercles rarely, to make all split."

"The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates:
And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates."

Then, speaking in his natural voice:

"This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players."

Quince addresses the other players, assigning to each his part. Flute, the bellows-mender, protests against personating the heroine Thisbe, exclaiming:

"Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming,"

but is over-ruled by Quince, when Bottom says:

"An' I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too."

Then, trying to speak in a very soft gentle voice, and to personate both lovers, this truly comic personage, who is really a rough downright man, says:

"'Thisne, Thisne.' 'Ah! Pyramus, my lover dear; thy Thisbe dear, and lady dear!'"

Quince, trying to direct them all, replies:

"No, no; you must play Pyramus; Flute, you Thisbe."

He calls upon Starveling, Snout, and Snug, assigning each his part, when Bottom, either really or pretending to be stage-struck, and wishing to do more than his part, exclaims:

"Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, '*Let him roar again, let him roar again.*'"

The manager Quince, troubled like some other managers by vain or fanciful subordinates, is more perplexed by Bottom than by the rest, and tries to remonstrate:

"An' you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess, and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all."

The rest then exclaim:

"That would hang us, every mother's son,"

but Bottom, obstinately thinking he can do everything well, replies:

"I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us; but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an' 'twere any nightingale."

Quince then cleverly tries to make the irrepressible Bottom more complaisant by a little flattery:

"You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely, gentleman-like man; therefore you must needs play Pyramus."

Bottom, now not only satisfied but gratified, complacently replies:

"Well, I will undertake it,"

and then rather teases the manager by his questions, evidently delighted at the coming performance, asking:

"What beard were I best to play it in?"

Quince, likely tired of him, replies:

"Why, what you will,"

and Bottom, full of importance, proceeds:

"I will discharge it in either your straw-coloured beard, your orange-tawny beard, or your French crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow."

Quince, addressing the whole company, gives final and parting directions to them:

"Masters, here are your parts; and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night, and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight: there will we rehearse; for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogg'd with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not."

Bottom, who apparently speaks for the rest, replies with his usual self-importance:

"We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect; adieu."

Quince, evidently most anxious all should go right, says:

"At the duke's oak we meet,"

and Bottom pompously replies for himself and the others:

"Enough; hold, or cut bow-strings."

In this scene Quince and Bottom are the only two who seem to take much interest in the play, the latter evidently a conceited, pompous man, but a real lover of acting, with no end of self-confidence, while Quince seems naturally rather anxious, if not apprehensive about his duties as manager, but in the end arranges the play as he likes. The whole company seem thoroughly English, and perhaps

resemble or are drawn from some of Shakespeare's personal acquaintances during his reported connection with the London stage. There is certainly nothing classical about them, and the names of Athens, Theseus, Hippolyta, etc., sound strange in any sort of connection with them. London or some large English provincial town in Shakespeare's time, full of mingled energy, fancy, and comparative ignorance, would have been the natural home for these theatre-loving artisans. The allusion to Frenchmen's beards would doubtless have well amused a London audience, but is an obvious absurdity among ancient Greeks. The next act and scene are in the wood before indicated, near Athens, where an unnamed fairy meets the mischievous imp Puck, nicknamed Robin Goodfellow, the roguish yet obedient servant of Oberon, king of the fairies. Puck, fortunately for mankind, though by nature full of mischief, is always under Oberon's control, who with his Queen Titania are friendly to the human race, and happily free from the malevolence often attributed to fairies in English and perhaps yet more in Scottish legends.[1] The unnamed fairy does not again appear, while Puck reveals part of his mischievous nature which is well known to the fairy, though at first she does not recognise him. She exclaims to him, as if describing herself and her duties:

"Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through brier,
Over park, over pale,
Through flood, through fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
. . . . . .
Farewell, thou lob of spirits: I'll be gone;
Our queen and all her elves come here anon."

Puck, who knows all the fairy news and secrets, informs her:

"The king doth keep his revels here to-night.
Take heed the queen come not within his sight;
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,

[1] See Scott's "Fair Maid of Perth."

Because that she as her attendant hath
A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king;
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;
But she, perforce, withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.
And now they never meet in grove, or green,
. . . . . .
But they do square."

The fairy recognises Puck, and exclaims, well knowing his character and mischievous tricks:

"Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
. . . . . .
Are not you he?"

Puck, proud instead of ashamed of his mischievous tricks, readily admits some additional ones:

"Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
. . . . . .
And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
. . . . . .
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I, down topples she,
And falls into a cough;
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh."

He breaks off, exclaiming:

"Here comes Oberon,"

and the fairy, dreading the present quarrel, exclaims:

"And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!"

Oberon and Titania appear attended by their fairy

followers, and immediately dispute, the former angrily exclaiming:

"Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania,"

and she defiantly replies:

"What! jealous Oberon. Fairies, skip hence:
I have forsworn his bed and company."

Oberon indignantly rejoins:

"Tarry, rash wanton! am not I thy lord?"

Titania makes a jealous reply:

"Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stol'n away from fairy land."

Oberon equally jealous, and both sharing the feelings of human nature, makes a counter accusation:

"How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst not thou lead him through the glimmering night
. . . . . .
And make him with fair Ægle break his faith,
With Ariadne, and Antiopa?"

It is remarkable that despite the alleged loves of Oberon and Titania for Theseus and Hippolyta, those powerful mortals, the rulers of the state, never mention the fairy king and queen, nor are they ever brought in contact with them. Like the sun and moon, Theseus seems to rule in the day, and Oberon in the night. Titania repels, or tries to repel, Oberon's reproaches in a beautiful speech which, following common tradition, ascribes disastrous unnatural seasons, and many human misfortunes, to the disputes of the fairies:

"These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.

Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land
Have every petty river made so proud,
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
. . . . . .
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock,
. . . . . .
The human mortals want their winter here:
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, ~~the governess of floods~~,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound:
And through this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old winter's thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries, and the 'mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evil comes
From our debate, from our dissension:
We are their parents and original."

Oberon evidently sharing Titania's belief in so much evil caused to the natural world by quarrels among the fairies, rejoins, trying to lay the blame on her:

"Do you amend it then; it lies in you
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman."

Titania, wilful, obstinate, and apparently independent of his control, proudly retorts:

"Set your heart at rest;
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order:
And in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood;
. . . . . .
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him."

Oberon naturally dissatisfied with her answer, asks:

"How long within this wood intend you stay?"

and Titania haughtily replies:

"Perchance, till after Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts."

Oberon, disregarding this taunt of his jealous queen, exclaims:

"Give me that boy, and I will go with thee,"

and she proudly retorts:

"Not for thy fairy kingdom."

Then addressing her attendants, she exclaims:

"Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay."

With these rather defiant words Titania departs with her train, leaving Oberon disappointed, yet determined to gain his point by a new artifice. He exclaims first to himself:

"Well, go thy way; thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury."

Then addressing the ever active little Puck:

"My gentle Puck, come hither: thou remember'st
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music."

This beautiful sight Puck well recollects, as he replies

"I remember,"

and Oberon proceeds to enlighten as well as direct him:

"That very time I saw (but thou could'st not)
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;

But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon;
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell;
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it Love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I show'd thee once:
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league."

Puck, always alert and ready, flies off on his mission. It has been supposed that "the fair vestal throned by the west" meant Queen Elizabeth, but this statement, though perhaps true, has never been actually proved, owing to so little being known of Shakespeare's personal history. After Puck disappears Oberon alone reveals his powers and intentions:

"Having once this juice
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes:
The next thing then she waking looks upon
(Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape)
She shall pursue it with the soul of love:
And ere I take this charm from off her sight
(As I can take it with another herb)
I'll make her render up her page to me."

At this moment Demetrius appears, followed by Helena, who loves him despite his dislike to her. The fairy king, friendly, like his queen, to all mortals apparently, or at least to all in this play, hides himself to hear their conference. Demetrius vainly tries to repel Helena, saying he does not love her, but Hermia, whom he is seeking. He asks:

"Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood;
. . . . . .
Hence! get thee gone, follow me no more."

The enamoured Helena replies:

"You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant,"

and he asks:

"Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?
Or rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not nor I cannot love you?"

and she again retorts:

"And even for that do I love you the more."

Demetrius replies in cold reproof:

"You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city, and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not;
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill-counsel of a desert place."

To this reproach Helena makes an eloquent, affecting answer:

"Your virtue is my privilege: for that
It is not night when I do see your face,
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are all the world:
Then how can it be said I am alone?"

Still unmoved, Demetrius declares he will run off and leave her "to the mercy of wild beasts," when she rejoins pathetically:

"The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be changed;
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger: bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues and valour flies!
. . . . . .
We cannot fight for love, as men may do;
We should be woo'd and were not made to woo."

He rushes off, and the infatuated Helena, as she follows him, exclaims:

"I'll follow thee
To die upon the hand I love so well."

Oberon, when they are gone, exclaims, pitying Helena:

"Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love."

and they sleep, when Puck enters, and making an unlucky mistake, taking Lysander for Demetrius, exclaims:

"This is he, my master said,
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
. . . . . .
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.
When thou wak'st let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid:
So awake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon."

He departs, and Demetrius now enters with Helena. He, as before, repels her, and telling her not to follow, goes off, while she deplores her fate, exclaiming:

'Oh! I am out of breath in this fond chase.
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;
For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:
If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers."

Then finding Lysander, but not Hermia, she asks:

"But who is here? Lysander! on the ground?
Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.
Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake."

Lysander wakes, and under the new influence of the magic juice, which Puck had dropped on his eyes by mistake, instead of on Demetrius, immediately loves Helena, and to her surprise threatens the absent Demetrius, exclaiming:

"Oh! how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword."

Helena replies:

"Do not say so, Lysander;
What though he love your Hermia?
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content."

Lysander rejoins, to Helena's amazement:

"Content with Hermia! No: I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia, but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?"

Despite this flattering comparison Helena thinks he is only mocking her, and indignantly asks:

> "Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
> When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
> Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,
> That I did never, no, nor never can,
> Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
> But you must flout my insufficiency?
> . . . . . .
> O! that a lady of one man refus'd
> Should of another therefore be abus'd."

She departs, and Lysander, left alone with the sleeping Hermia, whom he loves no longer, exclaims:

> "She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there;
> And never may'st thou come Lysander near."

Then devoted now to Helena, Lysander, quite under the influence of the magic juice, adds with ardent resolution:

> "And all my powers, address your love and might
> To honour Helen, and to be her knight.'

He goes off leaving Hermia alone. Puck, in mistaking him for Demetrius, had fully expected from Oberon's directions to find Demetrius where he unluckily came upon Lysander, the only blunder which this artful imp makes in the whole play. Hermia wakes after Lysander is gone, and fancying he is near, exclaims:

> "Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy best
> To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast."

Then evidently knowing this idea is only imagination, she exclaims:

> "Ah me, for pity! what a dream was here!"

Then she calls to him, and at last perceives he is gone:

> "Lysander! what! removed? Lysander! lord!
> What! out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?
> . . . . . .
> Then I well perceive you are not nigh:
> Either death or you I'll find immediately,"

and with these words she follows him through the wood.

The next act and scene introduce the Athenian workmen assembled in a wood, preparing for their strange comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe. These men, as before observed, though placed in Athens, are altogether English both in names and characters.[1] They are a party of play-loving or stage-struck artisans, yet only the manager, Peter Quince, a carpenter, and Nick Bottom, a weaver, have much to say. The rest apparently are quite under their directions or management. Quince, who eagerly expects to produce a successful play, and tries to keep the others up to their work, exclaims:

"Here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke."

Bottom, evidently a conceited, as well as comic personage, proposes improvements, and probably rather troubles the manager, whom he thus addresses:

"Peter Quince, there are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?"

Snout, the tinker, and the tailor Starveling, agree with Bottom, the former exclaiming, like an English peasant of Shakespeare's time:

"By'r lakin, a parlous fear,"

and the latter:

"I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done."

Bottom condescendingly suggests his own alterations, exclaiming:

"Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue: and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and

[1] "It is possible that in the rude dramatic performance of these handicraftsmen of Athens, Shakespeare was referring to the plays and pageants exhibited by the trading companies of Coventry, which were celebrated down to his own time, and which he might very probably have witnessed."—Howard Staunton's Notes to his edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them, that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver; this will put them out of fear."

Quince, either approving of these changes, or perhaps anxious to please Bottom, agrees to them, when the latter makes a new objection. Addressing all the company in pompous fashion, Bottom says, evidently thinking that of all present he knows best:

"Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves; to bring in, God shield us! a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing; and we ought to look to it."

Snout the tinker agreeing exclaims:

"Therefore, another prologue must tell he is not a lion."

But Bottom, determined to have his own way, rejoins:

"Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,"

and he then dictates to his fellow-actors what the lion personator should say in a meek voice:

"'*Ladies, fair ladies, I would wish you, I would request you, I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble; my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life; no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are,*'"

then resuming his natural voice, Bottom adds:

"and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner."

This worthy apparently agrees all through with Bottom, to whom Quince, the manager, also submits, and they then make arrangements about the coming performance. They decide that one of the actors should represent a wall, through a chink of which Pyramus and Thisbe are to whisper to each other, and Bottom suggests:

"Some man or other must present Wall; and let him have some plaster, or some loam about him to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus,"

Here Bottom probably holds up his own for illustration, thus concluding:

"and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper."

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Quince, always ruled by his self-important colleague, replies:

"If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts."

Puck now approaches unseen, and perceiving what they are about, exclaims:

"What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?
What! a play toward; I'll be an auditor;
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause."

Quince, in his position as manager of the troupe, now asks Bottom to rehearse his part, and he begins as Pyramus, addressing the heroine:

"'*Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet,—*'"

This first mistake Quince corrects, exclaiming:

"Odours, odours,"

and Bottom resumes:

"'So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear,
But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear.'"

Bottom withdraws, and Puck, planning a trick on him, mockingly says to himself:

"A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd here!"

and departs. Flute, the bellows-mender, acting Thisbe, asks:

"Must I speak now?"

and Quince replies:

"Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again."

Thisbe, thus directed, proceeds:

"'Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,
. . . . . .
I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb,'"

Quince, troubled like other managers since his time with the mistakes of actors, exclaims:

"'Ninus' tomb,' man. Why, you must not speak that yet; . . . . Pyramus, enter; your cue is past; it is '*never tire.*'"

Puck invisible enters, having put a donkey's head he has procured somewhere on Bottom, who enters with him, and Thisbe continues, not seeing him:

"'*O! As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.*'"

Bottom replies, never feeling the ass's head on him:

"'If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine.'"

Quince now sees the donkey's head, and, terrified, shouts to the terror of all the actors, who now perceive the strange object before them:

"O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted.
Pray, masters! fly, masters! help!"

All rush off, while Puck resolves on playing more tricks, but is luckily restrained by Oberon's control from doing serious harm, yet as a regular imp of mischief he exclaims:

"I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:
Sometimes a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire at every turn."

Puck vanishes, and Bottom, left alone, has no idea of what has happened, and is therefore completely mystified. He exclaims in unsuspicious amazement:

"Why do they run away? this is the knavery of them to make me afeard."

Snout the tinker is the first to re-enter, exclaiming in real fright:

"O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee."

To this query Bottom, provoked, answers perhaps with unconscious wit:

"What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you?"

Quince re-enters frightened likewise, exclaiming:

"Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated,"

and both he and Snout run away; while Bottom, again alone, puzzled and angry, fancies they are not really frightened, but trying to make him so, and exclaims:

"I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid."

He then sings in probably a rough, unmusical voice a quaint song, mentioning some of the commonest English small birds, all of which he might have seen and heard near London, describing them briefly, yet correctly:

"'The ousel-cock,[1] so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill.'"

At his voice, likely loud and coarse, the fairy queen wakes, thinking it lovely, and that the singer is the perfection of beauty. She asks immediately:

"What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?"

and Bottom, neither seeing nor hearing her, proceeds with his rural ditty:

"'The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark.'"

Titania, delighted with his song, or perhaps only the sound of it, exclaims eagerly:

"I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force, perforce, doth move me,
On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee."

Bottom, who now sees her, but is either too confused

[1] The blackbird.

by fairy influence, or too stupid by nature to show surprise or admiration, never notices her appearance, while stolidly answering, with a sort of dull or perhaps modest shrewdness:

"Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that; and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days. The more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion."

Titania, full of fanciful admiration for what she believes his combined sense and beauty, replies in stupefied sincerity:

"Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful."

To this delightful tribute of admiration Bottom returns a thoroughly practical, unsentimental reply, showing that he is not in the least gratified by his lovely admirer:

"Not so, neither; but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood I have enough to serve mine own turn."

Titania, still enchanted by her idea of him, eagerly rejoins:

"Out of this wood do not desire to go:
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of ~~no common~~ rate;
The summer still doth tend upon my state;
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep."

She summons four attendant sprites, Peas-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-seed, and thus directs them:

"Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise;
. . . . . .
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies."

The four little sprites, probably laughing secretly, exclaim, saluting Bottom:

"Hail, mortal! Hail! Hail! Hail!"

Bottom, apparently not much surprised by either them or Titania, asks their names, while one replies:

"Cobweb,"

and Bottom rejoins in evident good humour:

"I shall desire you of more acquaintance: if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you."

Then addressing another he asks:

"Your name, honest gentleman?"

and the fairy answers:

"Peas-blossom."

Bottom answers in a sort of joke:

"I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. I shall desire you of more acquaintance too."

Then he asks a third:

"Your name, I beseech you, sir?"

and the sprite answers:

"Mustard-seed."

Bottom more interested by this fairy than by the other two, cordially rejoins, as if in pleasant recollection:

"Good Master Mustard-seed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like oxbeef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you more acquaintance, good Master Mustard-seed."

Bottom might perhaps have also questioned Moth, when Titania addresses the four sprites:

"Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower:
The moon methinks looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,"

then as if apprehending Bottom making some objection, she imperatively adds:

"Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently."

Bottom, like a prisoner, and apparently stupefied, departs with Titania and the fairies in silence; while the next scene introduces Oberon in another part of the wood, wondering to himself if Titania is awakened, and what sort of a creature she will then see first with whom she must fall in love. Puck now appears, in evident delight, and, highly amused, thus relates what has happened:

"My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented in their sport,
Forsook his scene, and enter'd in a brake,
When I did him at this advantage take;
An ass's nowl I fixed on his head:
. . . . . .
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass."

Oberon, delighted, praises Puck's cleverness even before his own, exclaiming:

"This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?"

Puck replies:

"I took him sleeping, that is finish'd too,
And the Athenian woman by his side;
That, when he waked, of force she must be ey'd."

At this moment Demetrius and Hermia appear, Oberon and Puck seeing them, remain hid or invisible hearing what they say. Oberon exclaims:

"This is the same Athenian,"

and Puck, perceiving his mistake, says:

"This is the woman; but not this the man."

Demetrius now bitterly complains that Hermia loves him not, while she fears he may have slain Lysander; and full of this idea, exclaims:

"It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim."

Demetrius, forgiving this terrible suspicion, and quite in love with her, makes an affecting reply:

"So should the murder'd look, and so should I,
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty;
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere."

Hermia, caring nothing for this compliment, exclaims:

"What's this to my Lysander? where is he?
Ah! good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?"

and he, full of jealousy, fiercely replies:

"I'd rather give his carcase to my hounds."

Hermia, from this savage answer, believing he has killed her lover, retorts:

"Hast thou slain him then?
Henceforth be never number'd among men!"

She continues to reproach him, when he replies:

"I am not guilty of Lysander's blood,
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell."

Hermia relieved, yet knowing Demetrius hates Lysander, rushes away, exclaiming;

"See me no more, whether he be dead or no,"

and Demetrius then exclaims to himself:

"There is no following her in this fierce vein:
Here therefore for a while I will remain,"

and evidently wearied, lies down and sleeps. Oberon, blaming Puck for his mistaking the lovers, asks him:

> " What hast thou done ? thou hast mistaken quite,
> And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight."

Fortunately Oberon is always benevolent, while Puck, though delighting in mischief, is quite under his orders, and the fairy king proceeds:

> " About the wood go swifter than the wind,
> And Helena of Athens look thou find:
> By some illusion see thou bring her here;
> I'll charm his eyes against she doth appear."

Puck, evidently anxious to make amends for his mistake, and to please his master, eagerly replies, while flying off on his delicate mission:

> " I go, I go; look how I go;
> Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow."

Oberon then proceeds to charm the sleeping Demetrius with the magic juice, exclaiming, though with kind intent:

> " Flower of this purple dye,
> Hit with Cupid's archery,
> Sink in apple of his eye.
> When his love he doth espy,
> Let her shine as gloriously
> As the Venus of the sky.
> When thou wak'st, if she be by,
> Beg of her for remedy."

The swift Puck now returns, eager, obedient and, anxious to make amends for his mistake, exclaiming:

> " Captain of our fairy band,
> Helena is here at hand;
> And the youth, mistook by me,
> Pleading for a lover's fee."

Then more slyly than sympathising, the imp asks:

> " Shall we their fond pageant see ?
> Lord, what fools these mortals be ! "

Oberon, always kind, and fortunately in power, replies:

> "Stand aside, the noise they make
> Will cause Demetrius to awake."

and Puck, full of restrained mischief, retorts:

> "Then will two at once woo one;
> That must needs be sport alone;
> And those things do best please me
> That befal preposterously."

Lysander and Helena enter; the latter knowing that he really loves Hermia, distrusts his new love for herself, which is alone caused by the love juice poured in mistake by Puck upon him. He asks in amorous entreaty, beautifully expressed:

> "Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
> Scorn and derision never come in tears:
> Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
> In their nativity all truth appears."

Helena indignant, thinking that he only mocks her, replies:

> "You do advance your cunning more and more,
> These vows are Hermia's; will you give her o'er?"

Lysander exclaims:

> "I had no judgement when to her I swore,"

and Helena with spirit retorts:

> "Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er,"

and he replies, remembering the past:

> "Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you."

At this moment Demetrius awakes, now for the first time in love with Helena, exclaiming:

> "O Helen! goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
> To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
> . . . . . .
> When thou hold'st up thy hand. O! let me kiss
> This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss."

Helena, astonished at his sudden love, and believing both the youths are mocking her, exclaims in confused irritation:

> "O spite! I see you all are bent
> To set against me for your merriment;
> . . . . . .
> Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
> But you must join in souls to mock me too!
> . . . . . .
> You both are rivals, and love Hermia,
> And now both rivals, to mock Helena.
> . . . . . .
> None of noble sort
> Would so offend a virgin, and extort
> A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport."

Lysander, still under magic influence, also reproaches Demetrius, exclaiming:

> "You are unkind, Demetrius: be not so;
> For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
> And here with all good will, with all my heart,
> In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;
> And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
> Whom I do love, and will do till my death."

Helena, distrusting both alike, remembering their former conduct, exclaims indignantly:

> "Never did mockers waste more idle breath,"

while Demetrius exclaims:

> "Lysander, keep thy Hermia: I will none:
> If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone,
> And now to Helen is it home return'd,
> There to remain."

Lysander, disbelieving him, says to Helena:

> "Helen, it is not so,"

and Demetrius fiercely rejoins:

> "Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
> Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.
> Look! where thy love comes: yonder is thy dear."

Hermia appears, rejoicing at having found Lysander,

and reproaching him for leaving her; he now astounds her also by replying in a scornful question:

> "Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?"

and she asks in reply, still loving him, and remembering he loved her:

> "What love could press Lysander from my side?"

Then he answers:

> "Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
> Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,
> The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?"

Hermia, amazed in her turn like Helena, exclaims in wonder:

> "You speak not as you think; it cannot be,"

while Helena, believing the whole three are plotting to deceive her, exclaims with bitter indignation against all:

> "Lo! she is one of this confederacy.
> Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
> To fashion this false sport in spite of me."

and then eloquently yet sadly reproaches her former friend, Hermia, pathetically recalling their early friendship:

> "Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!
> Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd
> To bait me with this foul derision?
> Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
> The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
> When we have chid the hasty-footed time
> For parting us, O! and is all forgot?
> We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
> Have with our neelds created both one flower,
> Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
> Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
> As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
> Had been incorporate. So we grew together
> . . . . . .
> And will you rend our ancient love asunder,
> To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
> Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
> Though I alone do feel the injury."

Hermia, quite mystified by these unexpected reproaches, can only answer:

> "I am amazed at your passionate words.
> I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me."

Helena then accuses Hermia of setting Lysander against her, and also of inducing Demetrius to pretend to love her. Hermia cannot understand what she means, while Helena, believing that she and the two young men are in league against her, continues to reproach them, exclaiming:

> "Make mouths upon me when I turn my back;
> Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up:
> If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
> You would not make me such an argument.
> But, fare ye well: 'tis partly my own fault,
> Which death or absence soon shall remedy."

Lysander and Demetrius now alike declare their love for Helena, and Hermia is utterly confounded at the former's sudden desertion of her, and vainly seeking explanation, at length asks:

> "What means, my love.
> Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?
> I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
> Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me:
> Why then you left me! O, the gods forbid!—
> In earnest, shall I say?"

and Lysander replies in decisive words:

> "Be certain, nothing truer: 'tis no jest,
> That I do hate thee and love Helena."

This avowal infuriates Hermia against Helena, and both ladies quarrel vehemently, despite their former friendship. Hermia, more like an angry boy than a young lady, declares that though shorter than her rival, she could yet vanquish her in personal combat. Helena having called her "a puppet," Hermia defiantly retorts:

> "Puppet? why so? Ay, that way goes the game.
> Now I perceive that she hath made compare
> Between our statures: she hath urged her height;

And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him,"

then finally challenging her rival:

"And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes."

Helena, alarmed at her sudden fury, appeals to both the young men for protection, exclaiming:

"I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me:
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her."

Hermia, more touchy than ever about her appearance, exclaims:

"Lower! hark, again."

The more timid Helena again expostulates:

"Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;
But he hath chid me hence,
. . . . . .
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back,
And follow you no further."

Hermia sharply answers:

"Why, get you gone. Who is't that hinders you?"

and poor Helena replies:

"A foolish heart, that I leave here behind."

Hermia then asks:

"What! with Lysander?"

and Helena replies:

"With Demetrius."

At these words Hermia is apparently in a rage, for Lysander exclaims as if interfering:

"Be not afraid: she shall not harm thee, Helena,"

and Demetrius for once agreeing with Lysander, adds:

"No sir; she shall not, though you take her part."

Helena, evidently afraid of her angry rival, exclaims:

"O! when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd.
And though she is but little, she is fierce."

This unlucky personal allusion, probably a just one, infuriates Hermia, who exclaims:

"Little again! nothing but 'low' and 'little'!"

Then addressing the young men:

"Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her."

But they, while separating the two ladies, now defy each other, both in love with Helena, and depart, meaning to fight a duel in another part of the wood. Helena also departs in another direction, exclaiming to Hermia,:

"Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
My legs are longer though, to run away."

The angry yet amazed Hermia then exclaims to herself:

"I am amazed, and know not what to say,"

and then rushes off after Helena. When all four are gone, Oberon sharply reproves Puck for making such mistakes between the Athenian lovers, exclaiming:

"This is thy negligence: still thou mistak'st,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully."

Puck protests that he meant to obey:

"Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes."

Then as if unable to repress his natural love of mischief, despite his loyalty to Oberon, he adds:

> "And so far am I glad it so did sort,
> As this their jangling I esteem a sport."

Oberon, knowing he can rule him, never notices the imp's last words, which seem hardly consistent with obedience, and proceeds to give him directions of a mysterious, yet benevolent nature:

> "Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight:
> Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
> The starry welkin cover thou anon
> With drooping fog as black as Acheron;
> And lead these testy rivals so astray,
> As one come not within another's way.
> Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
> Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;
> And from each other look thou lead them thus,
> Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
> With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep:
> Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;
> Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
> To take from thence all error with his might,
> . . . . . .
> When they next wake, all this derision
> Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,
> . . . . . .
> Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
> I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;
> And then I will her charmed eye release
> From monster's view, and all things shall be peace."

Puck, though quite obedient, makes a singular reply, intimating that Oberon has more power at night than in the day:

> "My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
> For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
> And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger;
> At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
> Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,
> Already to their wormy beds are gone;
> For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
> They wilfully themselves exile from light,
> And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night."

Oberon, as if knowing the superiority of his fantastic, harmless race, proudly rejoins:

"But we are spirits of another sort:
I with the morning's love have oft made sport,
And like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams."

Yet apparently wishing his will done by night, Oberon adds:

"But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay;
We may effect this business yet ere day."

He departs, and Puck, evidently exulting in his secret powers, exclaims to himself:

"Up and down, up and down;
I will lead them up and down:
I am fear'd in field and town,
Goblin lead them up and down."

Lysander enters, angrily exclaiming:

"Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now."

Puck, doubtless well imitating Demetrius, now replies as if ready for combat:

"Here, villain! drawn and ready. Where art thou?"

Lysander rejoins;

"I will be with thee straight,"

and Puck replies:

"Follow me, then,
To plainer ground,"

and departs, followed by Lysander, who only hears the voice; Demetrius then appears, equally eager to find Lysander, and Puck leading him also astray, provokingly says, imitating Lysander:

"Come, recreant; come, thou child;
I'll whip thee with a rod: he is defil'd
That draws a sword on thee."

Demetrius in a rage retorts:

"Yea; art thou there?"

and Puck rejoins;

"Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here."

They depart, when Lysander re-enters, vainly seeking Demetrius, and fancying he is fleeing from him, while he himself, tired out lies down to sleep, threatening vengeance on Demetrius the next morning. Puck, always invisible, re-enters, followed by Demetrius, the latter vainly trying to pursue what he believes to be his foe. Puck torments them in turn, calling them both cowards alternately and with the like result, for Demetrius, now as wearied as Lysander, lies down to rest, calling at last to Puck, who says:

"Come hither; I am here."

. . . . . .

Demetrius rejoins:

"Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear,
If ever I thy face by daylight see;
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed;
By day's approach look to be visited."

He sleeps, when Helena appears, weary with wandering through the wood without seeing any one, and also lies down and falls asleep, while the ever watchful Puck exclaims to himself in jest, but not allowed to do mischief:

"Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds make up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad:
Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad."

Hermia appears, complaining like Helena of weariness exclaiming:

"Never so weary, never so in woe,
. . . . . .
Here will I rest me till the break of day,
Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray."

She lies down and sleeps, while Puck surveys the reposing lovers whom he now knows aright. In obedience to Oberon, and perhaps rather against his mischievous nature, he addresses the sleeping Lysander, while dropping the magic liquor on his eye, rather in the style of his king when pouring the juice on Titania asleep:

> "On the ground
> Sleep sound:
> I'll apply
> To your eye,
> Gentle lover, remedy.
> When thou wak'st,
> Thou tak'st
> True delight
> In the sight
> Of thy former lady's eye."

He then concludes his singular performance with comforting homely lines, probably well known in rural districts during Shakespeare's time:

> "And the country proverb known,
> That every man should take his own
> In your waking shall be shown:
> Jack shall have Jill;
> Nought shall go ill;
> The man shall have his mare again,
> And all shall be well."

He then departs, leaving the lovers all asleep, and unconscious of each other's presence. The next act and scene revert to Titania with her fairies leading Bottom through another part of the wood, while Oberon watches them unseen. This shrewd, comic, yet ignorant man, never shows surprise at his strange adventures, and would seem dazed, or partly stupefied, yet never frightened; though aware of all around him. He seems neither pleased nor angry, in fact takes everything easy, never says who he is, shows no admiration for Titania, and though rather amused with the little fairies, tells them to do ridiculous things, as if he were really in a dream. Titania, quite mystified, thinking Bottom everything that is charming,

also seems more or less sleepy and dreamy throughout. In fact no other of Shakespeare's plays represents so much sleeping and dreaming as this beautiful yet fantastic comedy. Titania, choosing some fresh place of repose, though only lately awaked, addresses Bottom in dreamy love:

> "Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
> While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
> And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
> And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy."

Bottom, without noticing her, though close beside him, stolidly asks:

"Where's Peas-blossom? Scratch my head, Peas-blossom. Where's Monsieur Cobweb? Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Where's Monsieur Mustard-seed? Give me your neaf,[1] Monsieur Mustard-seed."

The little imp thus addressed, apparently pinches or hurts Bottom's hand, who exclaims:

"Pray you, leave your courtesy, good monsieur,"

and then asks him to help Cobweb to scratch his head, which likely enough is tickled with the donkey's hair, as he naturally adds, little knowing what is on him:

"I must to the barber's, monsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face, and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch."

Titania never perceives the truth, while her little attendants doubtless enjoy the whole scene, but dare not reveal or explain it to their mistress. When hearing Bottom's complaining voice she asks tenderly, longing to gratify him:

"What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?"

Bottom likely associating all music with a loud or merry noise, immediately rejoins:

"I have a reasonable good ear in music; let's have the tongs and the bones."

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[1] Fist.

Titania, perhaps not being able or willing to provide this sort of entertainment, makes another suggestion:

"Or say, sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat."

Bottom, who under magic influence apparently has some of the tastes as well as the head of a donkey, replies:

"Truly, a peck of provender. I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow."

Titania, apparently not prepared or inclined to offer this food, says:

"I have a venturous fairy that shall seek
The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts."

But Bottom, preserving a donkey's taste, drowsily replies:

"I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me; I have an exposition of sleep come upon me."

He sleeps, and Titania lovingly exclaims:

"Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies begone, and be all ways away."

They doubtless vanish at her order, and then fondling Bottom, she exclaims:

"So doth the woodbine the sweet honey-suckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O! how I love thee; how I dote on thee!"

and then sleeps beside him. Oberon advances, and Puck enters, to whom the former says:

"Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this sweet sight?"

Puck doubtless laughs at the question and the sight before him, but is too respectful to show much merriment, while the fairy king proceeds:

"Her dotage now I do begin to pity";

He then tells Puck he has since seen Titania and

obtained the coveted Indian boy from her. This curious scene between the king and queen is not introduced, and would seem hardly compatible with Titania's wilfulness, but for Oberon's mysterious influence, owing to the magic juice. It is evidently through its means that the benevolent fairy king has shown such power over both mortals and fairies, and apparently Titania does not share this power with him. Oberon then directs Puck, who, despite late mistakes, has his full confidence:

> "And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
> From off the head of this Athenian swain,
> That, he awaking when the other do,
> May all to Athens back again repair,
> And think no more of this night's accidents
> But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
> But first I will release the fairy queen."

He accordingly touches the eyes of the sleeping Titania with the magic herb, an antidote to the former juice, saying at the time:

> "Be as thou wast wont to be;
> See as thou wast wont to see:
> Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
> Hath such force and blessed power.
> Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen."

She immediately wakes to a complete knowledge of all around, while never referring to the Indian boy, the former bone of contention between her and the fairy king, and she asks, evidently quite reconciled to him:

> "My Oberon! what visions have I seen!
> Methought I was enamour'd of an ass."

Without explaining further, Oberon replies, perhaps sarcastically, indicating the sleeping Bottom:

> "There lies your love."

Titania astonished, and probably rather shocked, yet not irritated as yet by the harmless deceit practised on her, again asks him in wonder:

> "How came these things to pass?"

Then, evidently surveying Bottom with new and very different feelings, adds naturally enough:

"O! how mine eyes do loathe his visage now."

Oberon, as if anxious to postpone explanation, rejoins:

"Silence awhile."

and addressing Puck, says:

"Robin, take off this head."

He then tells Titania to call for music from the fairies, adding:

"And strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these five the sense."

and she, obeying, answers:

"Music, ho! music! such as charmeth sleep."

Music ensues, whether vocal, instrumental, or both is not named, while Puck, taking off the donkey's head, says with natural and excusable impudence:

"Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own fool's eyes peep."

Oberon, now obeyed by all around, exclaims:

"Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.
Now thou and I are new in amity,
And will to-morrow midnight solemnly
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,
And bless it to all fair posterity."

Then kindly alluding to the four Athenian lovers, he adds:

"There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity."

Puck, ever alert and watchful, here exclaims:

"Fairy king, attend, and mark;
I do hear the morning lark."

At this warning the fairies hasten to depart, Shake-

speare evidently believing the idea that they are chiefly, if not only, at night seen or known by mankind. Oberon, as if rather melancholy at the dawn of day which to mortals usually brings such relief, cheerfulness, and interest, exclaims:

> "Then, my queen, in silence sad,
> Trip we after the night's shade;
> We the globe can compass soon,
> Swifter than the wand'ring moon."

Titania, postponing all explanation of late events, yet most anxious to hear it, rejoins:

> "Come, my lord; and in our flight
> Tell me how it came this night
> That I sleeping here was found
> With these mortals on the ground."

They vanish, and then enter Duke Theseus with his queen Hippolyta, Egeus, and all their train, preparing for a hunt in this same eventful wood which is the scene of so many interesting sights. Theseus and his Amazonian consort take great delight in this sport. He, sending for the forester, orders his hounds to be uncoupled, while in the true spirit of an eager huntsman he addresses Hippolyta:

> "We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top.
> And mark the musical confusion
> Of hounds and echo in conjunction."

Perhaps few but eager hunting men would appreciate such music, but Hippolyta as great a lover of hunting as Theseus, thus recalls a delightful scene:

> "I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
> When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear
> With hounds of Sparta; never did I hear
> Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,
> The skies, the fountains, every region near
> Seem'd all one mutual cry: I never heard
> So musical a discord, such sweet thunder."

Theseus, perhaps thinking his own hounds cannot

be surpassed by any others, retorts, detailing all their merits:

"My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
Was never holloa'd to, nor cheered with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:
Judge when you hear."

Then perceiving the four sleeping Athenian lovers, he asks:

"But soft! what nymphs are these?"

Egeus, recognising the four, replies:

"My lord, this is my daughter here asleep;
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:"

and naturally adds:

"I wonder of their being here together."

Theseus always benevolent, and specially so on this happy hunting morning, graciously exclaims:

"No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, and hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.
But speak, Egeus, is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?"

Egeus:

"It is, my lord."

Theseus then orders the huntsmen to awake the four sleepers with their hunting horns. They all wake up at this inspiriting sound, and Theseus kindly says:

"Good-morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past";

He then asks in good-humoured jest:

"Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?"

This familiar mention of a Christian saint by a Pagan

Then getting no answer, he goes on, partly rambling, and partly reasoning with himself:

"God's my life! stolen hence, and left me asleep. I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was; man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream."

Bottom evidently remembers nothing clearly about Titania and the fairies; all his recollections are confused, he is neither pleased nor frightened, but simply puzzled, while clearly remembering his fellow-actors and their intended play. As he vainly tries to recall the fairy vision, he only gets more and more mystified. Unlike superstitious people in his situation, he never attributes his extraordinary dream to any evil power or influence, and shows no alarm whatever as he goes on wondering:

"Methought I was,—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had,—"

Here he seems to have some vague recollection quickly lost:

"but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had."

while in an amusing state of mental confusion, he proceeds:

"The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was."

Then a bright idea which he never in the play acts upon, strikes his shrewd, though rather dull mind. Remembering Peter Quince's liking for plays, poems or songs, he exclaims:

"I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke."

He never carries out this intention, nor does he tell his dream to Quince, which he apparently forgets,

otherwise Quince's conversation with him, and his composition on the subject, would have been most amusing. But the whole vision of the fairies, even the beauty of Titania, leaves nothing clear on Bottom's mind. He knows he had an extraordinary dream, yet can recollect nothing certain about it, and even his vague remembrance would seem to get weaker and weaker through time, and especially now when all his wits and senses are devoted to acting the play before Duke Theseus. The next scene is at Quince's house in Athens, in which Flute, Snout, and Starveling are assembled with Quince himself, and all the four wonder what has become of Bottom, upon whom the success of their play mainly depends. Flute pathetically exclaims:

"If he come not, then the play is marred:"

and asks:

"It goes not forward, doth it?"

and Quince replies:

"It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he."

and Flute rejoins:

"No; he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens."

Evidently Bottom, despite his conceit, is one of the cleverest among them, and Quince replies:

"Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice."

Flute here ventures to correct Mr Quince, observing:

"You must say 'paragon': a paramour is, God bless us! a thing of naught."

Snug, the joiner, then enters, saying that Duke Theseus is coming from the temple with lords and ladies, regretfully adding:

"If our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men."

Flute, with the same feelings, and vexed about the absent Bottom, exclaims:

"O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it; sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing."

Bottom now appears to the general joy, asking:

"Where are these lads! where are these hearts?"

and Quince eagerly exclaims in cordial welcome:

"Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!"

Bottom, important and mysterious, exclaims:

"Masters, I am to discourse wonders, but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out."

Quince naturally replies:

"Let us hear, sweet Bottom."

But the latter, always cool and practical, evidently more intent on the coming play than anything else, cautiously rejoins:

"Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined."

Then, addressing the other actors, he gives explicit directions:

"Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisbe have clean linen, and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws."

He then adds advice peculiarly suitable even to modern Greeks or Italians:

"And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath, and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy."

Probably they wish to hear more from Bottom about his late adventures, but he concludes, saying:

"No more words! away! go; away!"

and all depart, evidently alike intent on the coming performance. No mention is made of Bottom's dream during the rest of this play. He never asks Quince to write a ballad about it, as he had intended, when its recollection was fresh in his mind. This is truly to be regretted, as a most amusing scene might have been described of Bottom's narrating his thoughts and recollections to Quince, with the latter's questions and comments; and perhaps an attempted ballad. Bottom, however, like his fellow-actors, is quite absorbed in the coming play at the palace. Even the incident of the donkey's head that had so frightened the others is never again mentioned, which is extraordinary, as Bottom was wearing it when his friends last saw him, and they would surely have wished to know how he obtained, and how he got rid of it. In fact the beautiful dream has apparently quite vanished from Bottom's recollection, the beauty, grace, and compliments of Titania produce no apparent impression whatever on one whose common-sense, energy, and even self-conceit are alike devoted to making himself and his fellow-players do their best before their patronising Athenian ruler. The next and last act is in the palace of Theseus, where Hippolyta wonders at the curious tale of the four Athenian lovers; her surprise elicits a remarkable and beautiful reply from Theseus, in words often quoted by the poet's admirers:

> "Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
> Are of imagination all compact:
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
> That is the madman; the lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt."

This language would indicate that Egyptian beauty, afterwards so dangerously attractive in Cleopatra, was despised at Athens, while that of the Grecian Helen was thought perfection. Theseus, whom Shakespeare inspires

with so much of his own philosophic power and ideas, then gives a beautiful if somewhat fantastic description of poetic genius and enthusiasm:

"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

Hippolyta seems unable or unwilling to continue this sort of conversation, yet takes a lively interest in the four lovers who enter together. Theseus greets them with a most cordial welcome, and abandoning philosophic thoughts at this festive time, seems bent on giving pleasure and gratification to all around on the joyous occasion of his own approaching marriage. As a short time has to elapse before this great event, Theseus summons Philostrate, whom he terms, "our usual manager of mirth," and impatiently asks him:

"What abridgement have you for this evening?
What masque, what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy time, if not with some delight?"

Philostrate gives him a list of proposed entertainments, being evidently thought a judge of such performances, but indirectly recommends the play of Pyramus and Thisbe, thus comically describing it:

"A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
And tragical, my noble lord, it is,
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
Which when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed."

Theseus at once interested as Philostrate probably wished, asks:

"What are they that do play it

and Philostrate, who likely knows all about Quince and his company, replies:

> "Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,
> Which never labour'd in their minds till now,
> And now have toil'd their unbreathed memories
> With this same play, against your nuptial."

Theseus exclaims:

> "And we will hear it."

Philostrate, who though himself amused at this play, seems afraid that Theseus may be disappointed in it, rejoins:

> "No, my noble lord;
> It is not for you: I have heard it over,
> And it is nothing, nothing in the world;
> (Unless you can find sport in their intents)
> Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,
> To do you service."

These words interest Theseus all the more, as Philostrate likely meant they should, and he resolves to hear the play, ordering the actors to appear, while he asks the ladies present to take their places as listeners, exclaiming:

> "I will hear that play."

adding expressly in words worthy of a benevolent ruler:

> "For never any thing can be amiss,
> When simpleness and duty tender it.
> Go bring them in, and take your places, ladies."

Hippolyta, however, not anticipating much pleasure from Philostrate's words, and not understanding his meaning as well as Theseus does, exclaims:

> "I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged,
> And duty in his service, perishing."

Theseus answers:

> "Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing,"

and she rejoins:

> "He (Philostrate) says they can do nothing in this kind."

Theseus, resolved to hear the play, and wishing to gratify even his humblest subjects, replies in instructive words:

> "The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
> Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:
> And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
> Takes it in might, not merit.
> . . . . . .
> And in the modesty of fearful duty
> I read as much as from the rattling tongue
> Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
> Love, therefore and tongue-tied simplicity
> In least speak most, to my capacity."

Hippolyta, hardly sharing apparently Theseus's enlightened and politic thoughts, makes him no reply, and Philostrate in his duty as master of the ceremonies now introduces the players. Peter Quince begins the prologue, one worthy of himself, and luckily, before a very good-natured audience:

> "'*If we offend, it is with our good will.*
> *That you should think, we come not to offend,*
> *But with good will. To show our simple skill,*
> *That is the true beginning of our end.*
> *Consider then we come but in despite.*
> *We do not come as minding to content you,*
> *Our true intent is. All for your delight,*
> *We are not here. That you should here repent you,*
> *The actors are at hand; and, by their show,*
> *You shall know all that you are like to know.*'"

Theseus exclaims, but in good-humour:

> "This fellow doth not stand upon points."

Lysander, who, now friendly with Demetrius, watches the play with him, answers merrily, alluding to Quince:

> "He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord; it is not enough to speak, but to speak true."

Hippolyta evidently not much pleased or amused, observes rather scornfully:

> "Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government."

Theseus, willing to make the best of it, says;

"His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?"

All the five actors now appear in silence, while Quince continues:

"Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
But wonder on till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know;
This beauteous lady Thisbe is, certain.
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present
Wall, that vile Wall, which did these lovers sunder;
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper, at the which let no man wonder.
This man with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.
This grisly beast, which by name Lionhight,
The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright;
And as she fled, her mantle she did fall.
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain:
Whereat with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;
And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain,
At large discourse, while here they do remain."

Quince, Thisbe, Lion, and Moonshine go out, and Theseus wonders if the Lion is to speak, when Demetrius, a young man perhaps accustomed to better acting than what is before him, sarcastically says:

"No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when many asses do."

"Wall" then says that through his chinks the lovers Pyramus and Thisbe are to whisper.

"In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
. . . . . .
This loam, this rough-cast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall; the truth is so;
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper."

Theseus, at once practical and indulgent, here asks:

"Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?"

Demetrius only answers:

"It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord."

and Theseus, evidently interested, rejoins:

"Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!"

Bottom, then representing the young hero Pyramus, expecting to meet Thisbe, exclaims:

"I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot.
And thou, O wall! O sweet! O lovely wall!
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine;
Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyes."

Snout obligingly holds up his fingers, and Pyramus proceeds:

"Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this."

Then disappointed, the comic lover loses his temper:

"But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.
O wicked wall! through whom I see no bliss;
Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me!"

Theseus, always good-natured, yet perhaps roused by Bottom's angry voice, observes:

"The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again."

Bottom, for a moment abandoning his part in his eagerness to defend or explain the play, rather bluntly answers:

"No, in truth, sir, he should not. '*Deceiving me*' is Thisbe's cue; she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes."

Thisbe accordingly appears, and she and Pyramus whisper to each other through Snout's fingers, and agree to meet the next day at Ninus' tomb. The three actors

then depart for a time, while the spectators apparently are all indulgent or try to be, except Hippolyta, who with some reason cannot resist exclaiming:

"This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard."

Theseus, still making the best of it, says:

"The best in his kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them,"

to which sensible observation she rather sharply replies:

"It must be your imagination then, and not theirs."

Theseus, still indulgent to the strange nonsense intended to please them, replies:

"If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men."

The Lion and Moonshine now enter, the former tries to reassure the female part of the audience, while they are likely laughing at his absurdity:

"'You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am.'"

Theseus good-naturedly observes:

"A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience."

The young men, Demetrius and Lysander, are more critical, the former saying:

"The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw."

and the latter:

"This lion is a very fox for his valour."

Theseus rejoins in the same good-humoured strain:

"True; and a goose for his discretion."

Demetrius wittily replies:

"Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry his discretion; and the fox carries the goose,"

and Theseus rejoins:

"His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour; for the goose carries not the fox. It is well; leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon."

Moonshine now says:

"This lantern doth the horned moon present;
Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be."

Theseus, perhaps a little out of patience, here exclaims:

"This is the greatest error of all the rest. The man should be put into the lantern; how is it else the man i' the moon?"

Demetrius rather scornfully answers this query:

"He dares not come there for the candle; for you see, it is already in snuff.[1]

Hippolyta, who of all others least likes this strange exhibition, exclaims:

"I am aweary of this moon; would he would change!"

Theseus, more patient, rejoins:

"It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time."

And Lysander, perhaps more impatient, says:

"Proceed, Moon,"

and the player continues:

"All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lantern is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog."

Demetrius, who likely thinks he understands theatrical

[1] Anger. (See Howard Staunton's Note.)

arrangement better than the present performers, here exclaims:

"Why, all these should be in the lantern; for they are in the moon. But, silence! here comes Thisbe."

This heroine enters to keep her appointment with Pyramus, and not finding him, exclaims:

"'This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?'"

Here the lion roars, and Thisbe naturally runs away. This ridiculous scene amuses all beholders, and is therefore a success. Demetrius exclaims:

"Well roared, Lion."

Theseus:

"Well run, Thisbe,"

and even Hippolyta adds,

"Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace."

Here the lion tears Thisbe's mantle and departs, when Theseus, as if comparing the beast to a cat killing mice, exclaims encouragingly:

"Well moused, Lion."

Pyramus enters, exclaiming, in doubtless the softest tones that Bottom can assume:

"'Sweet moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams,
I thank thee, moon, for shining now so bright,
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to taste of truest Thisbe's sight.'"

Then changing from sentimentality to tragic alarm, of course all the more comic in such a performer:

"'But stay, O spite!
But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good,
What! stain'd with blood!
Approach, ye Furies fell!
O Fates, come, come;
Cut thread and thrum;
Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!'"

Theseus and Hippolyta now both seem interested or touched by Bottom's efforts to be tragic, the former exclaiming:

"This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad,"

and the latter, becoming more favourable to the play, adds:

"Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man,"

and Pyramus proceeds:

"'O! wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame,
Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear?
. . . . . .
Come, tears, confound;
Out, sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus.
. . . . . .
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
Now am I dead,
Now am I fled;
Now die, die, die, die, die."

He pretends to be dead, and the spectators make their different jokes on this amusing absurdity. Demetrius remarks wittily:

"No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one."

Lysander retorts:

"Less than an ace, man, for he is dead; he is nothing."

Theseus, in good-humoured sarcasm, observes:

"With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover."

Thisbe enters, and Hippolyta observes, as if wearied:

"I hope she will be brief."

Thisbe, seeing Pyramus lying motionless, exclaims:

"Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?
O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak! Quite dumb?
Dead, dead! A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone.
Lovers, make moan!
His eyes were green as leeks.
. . . . . .
Tongue, not a word:
Come, trusty sword;
Come blade, my breast imbrue:
And farewell, friends;
Thus Thisby ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu."

Thisbe then seems to die beside her lover, and Theseus observes:

"Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead."

Demetrius says:

"Ay, and Wall too,"

when Bottom, coming to life, and full of importance, partly gratified, yet anxious for more applause, says, putting his words wrong as before:

"No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to *see* the epilogue, or to *hear* a Bergomask dance[1] between two of our company?"

Theseus, who has probably heard enough of the play already, and knows that Hippolyta has yet resolved to be gracious, replies good-humouredly:

"No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed."

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[1] According to Mr Staunton, this was an Italian dance.

He then adds, doubtless much to Bottom's delight:

"Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus, and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy: and so it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone."

Then ensues a dance of clowns, probably a very comic performance; but during the whole scene Helena and Hermia say not a word, while Demetrius and Lysander, whose remarks on the play were rather disparaging, never say anything at its conclusion. They probably secretly ridicule the whole affair, but make the best of it to please the indulgent Duke Theseus, and restrain themselves from fault-finding. Quince, Bottom, and the rest, however, have certainly good reason to be well satisfied, as the applause of Theseus is of more consequence to them than any amount of praise from the others. He now addresses all around:

"The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve;
Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.
I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn
As much as we this night have overwatch'd.
This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled
The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.
A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
In nightly revels, and new jollity."

All depart, and Puck alone appears, it being now fairy time, in the deserted hall of the palace. This wonderful imp, so naturally mischievous, but luckily under Oberon's authority, exclaims to himself as if revealing the philosophy or belief of the fairy race:

"Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
. . . . . .
Now it is the time of night
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide:
And we fairies, that do run
. . . . . .
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,

Now are frolic; not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow'd house:
I am sent with broom before,
To sweep the dust behind the door."

At these words Oberon and Titania with their train enter, and the fairy king exclaims, showing his usual friendly spirit towards mortals, though his race was often thought hostile to them:

"Through the house give glimmering light
By the dead and drowsy fire;
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier;
And this ditty after me
Sing and dance it trippingly."

Titania, now agreeing with him, then says in the same kind spirit:

"First, rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note;
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place."

Then ensue a song and dance, while Oberon thus addresses his fairy subjects, advising all to be friendly to Duke Theseus, his bride, and the Athenian lovers:

"Now, until the break of day
Through this house each fairy stray
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be;
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be;
And the blots of Nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand:
Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despised in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this fairy-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait,
And each several chamber bless
Through this palace with sweet peace;
And the owner of it blest
Ever shall in safety rest."

Then, as if remembering his power is chiefly if not only in the night season, the fairy monarch concludes:

> "Trip away;
> Make no stay;
> Meet me all by break of day."

With this beautiful yet fantastic benediction, Oberon and all his fairies vanish, except Puck, who lingers behind to utter a few words apparently intended for an English theatrical audience, as the final close of the singular and lovely dream they have witnessed. These words are not in Puck's former sly, mischievous style, and are likely meant to propitiate and gratify the listeners.

> "If we shadows have offended,
> Think but this and all is mended,
> That you have but slumber'd here
> While these visions did appear.
> And this weak and idle theme,
> No more yielding but a dream,
> Gentles, do not reprehend:
> If you pardon, we will mend.
> And, as I am an honest Puck,
> If we have unearned luck
> Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
> We will make amends ere long;
> Else the Puck a liar call:
> So good-night unto you all
> Give me your hands, if we be friends,
> And Robin shall restore amends."

It is to be hoped that the requested clapping of hands usually greeted these last words of Puck in London theatres. Thus ends this beautiful play in which, with Puck's exception, all the fairies are represented as friendly to mankind. It may seem strange that though Oberon and Titania accuse each other of loving Theseus and Hippolyta at the beginning of the play, yet during its course the fairies are always invisible, and neither the duke nor his bride ever mentions Oberon and Titania. The mortals of high and low degree exert themselves in the daytime, while at night the fairies appear always friendly to them, but none of these human beings seem aware of

their existence, or at least they never mention them. In the fairies' behaviour to mankind this play presents a delightful contrast to what is usually alleged in ancient legends, traditions, or popular belief. Sir Walter Scott often mentions fairies as being very wayward, capricious, and generally dreaded.[1] The White Lady of Avenel in "The Monastery" seems entirely devoted to one human family, and to be thus rather an exception to the fairy race. Yet the fear of fairies especially by night seems to have been the usual result of most legends or traditions about them, and this apprehension has never entirely disappeared from rural sequestered districts, even in Great Britain and Ireland. But in this attractive play the fairies seem beneficent spirits; though only appearing at night, they take a kindly interest in human beings, while exercising a wonderful power over many of Nature's creations. Flowers and insects seem alike under their control. From the former they extract potent juice, using it for human benefit, while they expel all harmful specimens of the latter from the presence of their queen. Puck alone to some extent represents the prevalent association of fairies with spite or mischief, but is always under control. Between the characters of Theseus, the human ruler and the fairy king, there seems some points of resemblance in conduct and character. They are alike friendly and kind to all in their power, and, in different ways, promote their general happiness. Theseus and Hippolyta make a few classic allusions as if to confirm their being really Greeks, while the comic characters of Bottom and the other actors seem thoroughly English throughout. They resemble suburban workmen and artisans in the immediate neighbourhood of London. They are evidently delighted with theatrical performances, and the feelings and knowledge of Shakespeare's period are likely represented without much exaggeration. All the birds that Bottom sings about—blackbird, wren, finch, sparrow, thrush, lark and cuckoo—

[1] See "The Fair Maid of Perth."

are still among the most common in England, and seen near London. Naturalists will perceive that Bottom knows them well. The blackbird's "orange, tawny bill," the common thrush's sweet voice, the wren's little quill, and "the plain-song cuckoo grey," are to this day, despite guns, traps, and every new invention to destroy birds, still to be found every spring and summer around London as well as in most English counties. Milton, when describing the plays of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson as among the chief attractions of a city, especially a London life, writes:

> "Then to the well-trod stage anon
> If Jonson's learned sock be on,
> Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
> Warble his native wood-notes wild."[1]

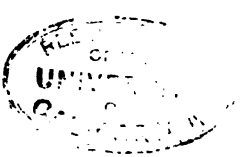
A Midsummer-Night's Dream seems to specially abound with Shakespeare's sweetest "wood-notes." The singular association of English artisans with Greek characters and localities seems to indicate the great interest which ancient Greek names, poetry, and historical incidents have always aroused among learned Europeans.[2] Egeus, Hippolyta, Theseus, and the four Athenian lovers would immediately attract a learned audience, while the introduction with English names of a weaver, joiner, tinker, etc., would at once amuse the more ignorant. In fact, this extraordinary play was in many respects eminently suited to an English and especially a London audience. Even to this day, despite the great number and high merit of subsequent dramas, it is still performed and appreciated by all well-educated hearers, and adorned with better

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[1] Milton's *Allegro*.

[2] "The civilisations of the Greek and Roman peoples represented at the time of the re-awakening of the European mind, the highest efforts of the race in almost every department of intellectual activity, and it was inevitable that the mental qualities of these peoples, and of the Greeks in particular, should excite the wonder and admiration of men after the long period of intellectual stagnation through which the world has passed" (Kidd's "Social Evolution," Chapter X., p. 251.)

theatrical accessories than at any previous time. It is also published in several separate editions apart from Shakespeare's other plays, thus proving its enduring charm and popularity during the present enlightened time. Its charming account of fairies, very friendly, rather than spiteful or dangerous to mankind, always has a pleasing effect on romantic and thoughtful minds, yet evidently a great dread of fairies has usually attended belief in them, from the earliest ages, and in most countries. None, however, can fear either Oberon or Titania; but on the contrary, most people would long to meet or see them, by day or night, and in whatever places they could possibly be met. Shakespeare, however, contrives that no meeting takes place between his fairies and the mortals, except in the case of Bottom, whose stupid or stupefied mind, seems incapable of making any revelation. During the whole play the fairies seem as invisible well-wishers, chiefly appearing at night, while they are not mentioned even by the four sentimental Athenian lovers. Yet these four, wandering by night through a fairy-haunted wood, might be reasonably supposed to take some interest in fairy existence; but they are entirely absorbed in their own love affairs, and seem quite unconscious of the secret influences around them. The mixture of the most practical, realistic, commonplace, if not vulgar people, with the most refined and fantastic personages and ideas, makes this play in some respects the most remarkable of all Shakespeare's comedies. It has almost always the happy effect of inspiring cheerfulness as well as interest among its readers. When we remember the many noble tragedies in which Shakespeare's genius has excited, touched, and captivated sympathetic minds, the delightful effect of this exquisite play is all the more valuable and welcome to those who can appreciate its real merits as well as its peculiarly attractive power.



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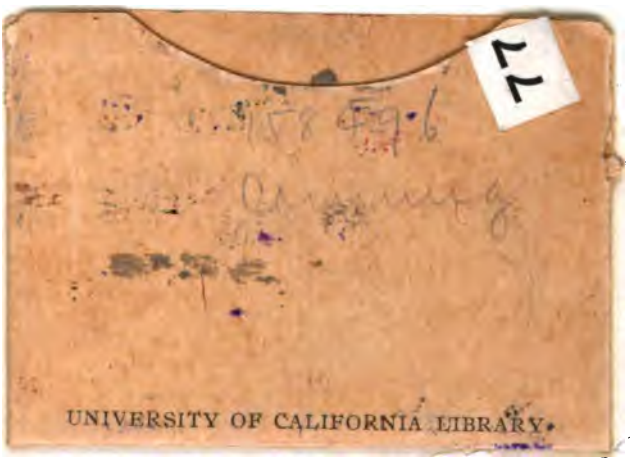
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